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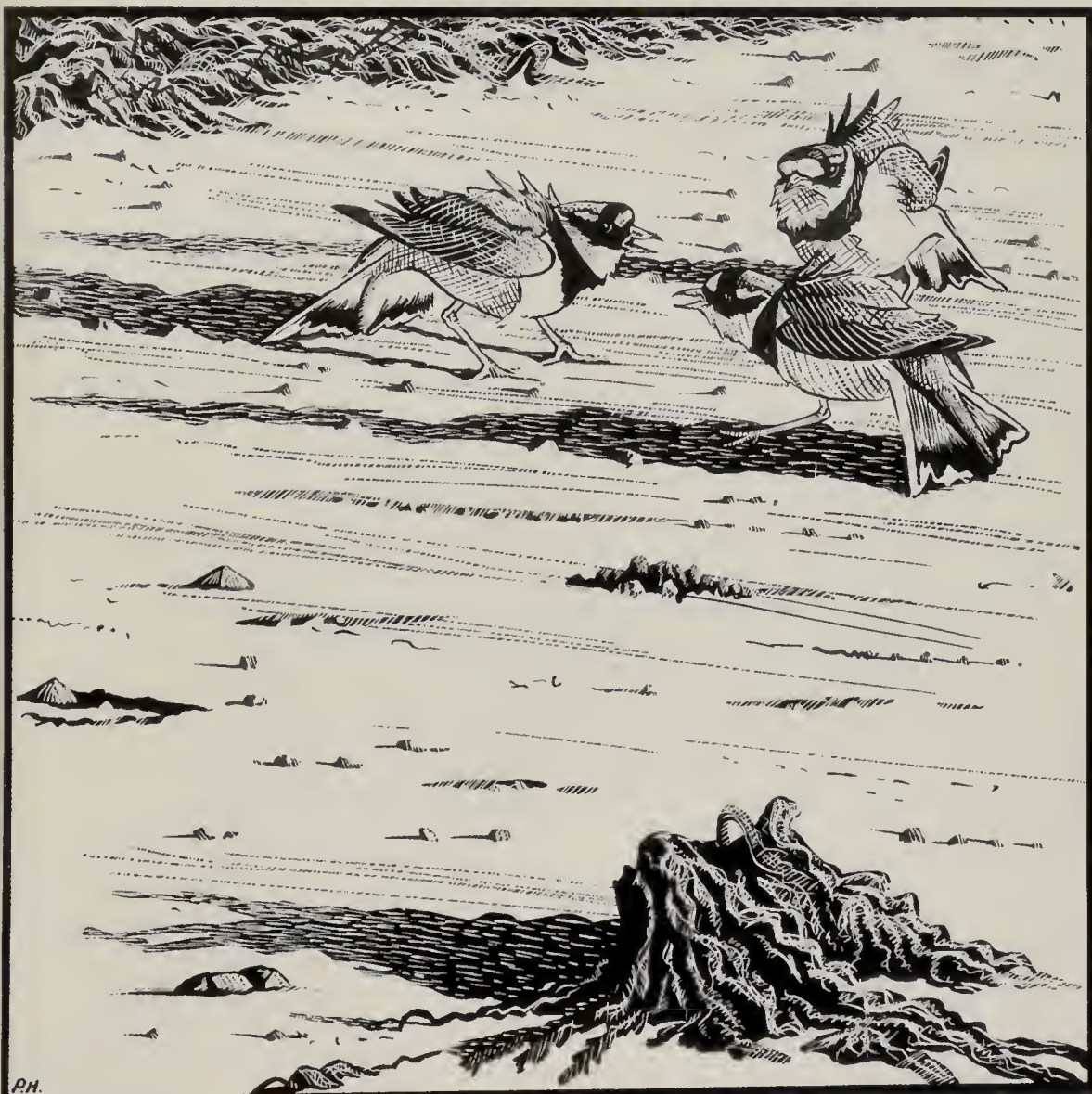


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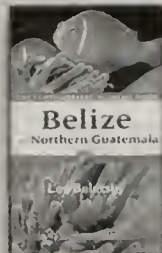
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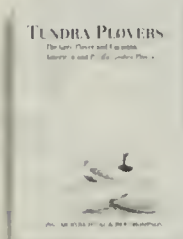
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APOLOGY The photographs of Ian Carter and Dr Martin Collinson were accidentally transposed on page 209 in the last month's issue. A revised four-page section (209-210, 259-260) is included in the centre of this issue for readers to substitute in their June issues.



British Birds

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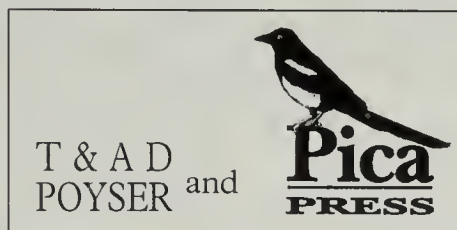
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'Bird Illustrator of the Year' and 'The Richard Richardson Award'



When we started this competition back in 1979 (*Brit. Birds* 72: 403-409), we hoped to encourage the art of bird illustration. Its success has, however, greatly exceeded our expectations, for the list of past winners of the title reads like a 'who's who' of bird

illustrators, and the spate of wonderful field guides and handbooks of recent years bear the names of many of them on the title pages. It is especially pleasing that two of the publishers involved—*Pica Press* and *T. & A. D. Poyser*—are the sponsors of this competition. We are delighted that it continues to be run in conjunction with, and is supported in a whole variety of ways by, the Society of Wildlife Artists.

With 19 years of texts giving advice to potential entrants, we now seldom receive submissions in which the scale is wrong, and the natural backgrounds have nowadays usually received just as much attention from the artist as have the birds. There is, however, still the occasional finch the size of a turkey.

Perhaps the most testing aspects of the Bird Illustrator of the Year competition are the requirements to produce four drawings; at three different, precise sizes; all drawn in a form suitable for printed reproduction. Sets of four seem often to comprise three good or even excellent drawings and one so duff that the set has to be discarded. That may seem severe or even unfair, but a professional bird illustrator needs not only to be able to produce careful and accurate drawings, but also to be sufficiently self-critical that he or she can discard any that have clearly failed. In a commercial setting, he or she may often be sending drawings to an impatient publisher or art editor who has no personal ornithological or natural-history expertise. It is the bird illustrator's job to produce drawings of a consistently high standard. That is why the 'BIY' rules are so precise and why we, the judges, are so critical in our assessments. Occasionally, artistic flair is allowed to override ornithological exactitude (when an especially evocative or attractive drawing has aesthetic appeal), but

ornithological inaccuracy, which includes making the bird look the wrong size in relation to its surroundings, is always completely unacceptable.

This year's prize-winners maintain the high standard which we have come to take for granted. The winners are as follows:

BIRD ILLUSTRATOR OF THE YEAR

1st Paul Henery (Morpeth, Northumberland)

2nd Dan Cole (St Austell, Cornwall)

3rd Peter Michael Beeson (Felixstowe, Suffolk)

Also short-listed: 4th Ernest Leahy (Redbourn, Hertfordshire), 5th= John Hollyer (Deal, Kent) and 5th= Anthony Smith (Tarbock, Merseyside)

THE RICHARD RICHARDSON AWARD

1st Simon Patient (Maldon, Essex)

Also short-listed: 2nd Marek Kolodziejczyk (Poland)

THE PJC AWARD

1st George Brown (Braintree, Essex)

Also short-listed: Peter Michael Beeson, Massimiliano Lipperi (Italy) and Anthony Smith

Examples of the work by all the winners are included here, and nine others will be appearing on the front covers of issues from now to June 1999.



BIRD ILLUSTRATOR OF THE YEAR
winner: Long-tailed Duck *Clangula hyemalis*
(Paul Henery)



BIRD ILLUSTRATOR OF THE YEAR winner: Black-necked Grebes *Podiceps nigricollis*
(Paul Henery)



Goldcrest *Regulus regulus* (Dan Cole)



Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator* (Dan Cole)



Great Bittern *Botaurus stellaris* (Peter Michael Beeson)

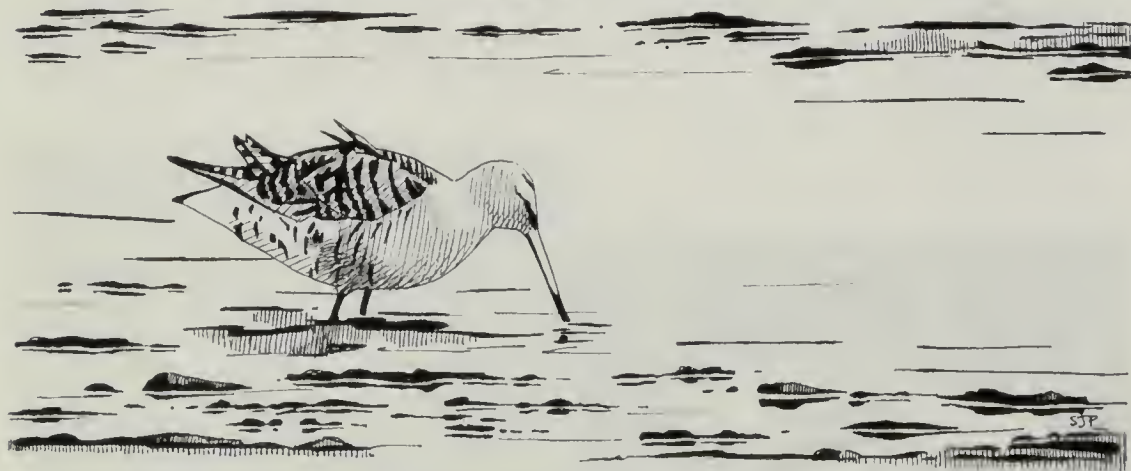


Fieldfares *Turdus pilaris* (Dan Cole)

The Richard Richardson Award is financed by a trust fund established in memory of the famous and well-loved Cley artist who died in 1977 (*Brit. Birds* 70: 541-543). He was, of course, the illustrator of what should perhaps be regarded as the first of the modern high-quality field guides, *The Pocket Guide to British Birds* (R. S. R. Fitter & R. A. Richardson, 1952). He was also always willing to encourage and help novice birdwatchers and artists. The Richard Richardson Award is open to all artists under the age of 22.



RICHARD RICHARDSON AWARD
winner: Spotless *Sturnus unicolor*/Common
Starling *S. vulgaris* in Scilly on 2nd
February 1998 (*Simon Patient*)



RICHARD RICHARDSON AWARD winner: Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* (*Simon Patient*)

The PJC Award, donated by David Cook in memory of his first wife, Pauline Cook, is presented annually to the artist whose individual drawing particularly appealed to the judges. It allows the judges to ignore the other drawings in a set and recognise a single illustration which shows especial flair, a new or enterprising technique, a bold approach, or any aspect which caught their eyes for any reason.

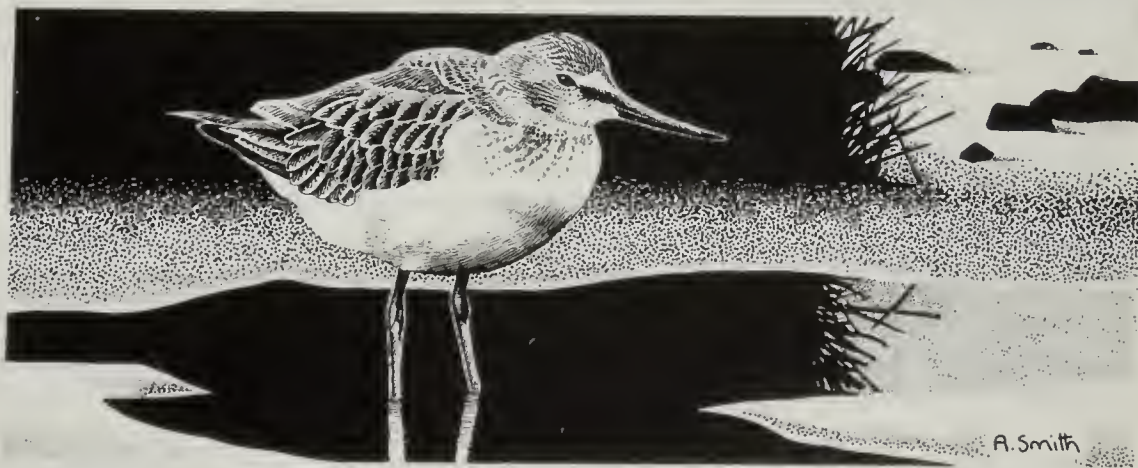
As usual, all the winning entries will be displayed at the Society of Wildlife Artists Annual Exhibition at The Mall Galleries in London from 23rd July to 7th August 1998. In total, we have selected 46 drawings for display at the Exhibition, by 24 artists, all of whom will be invited to attend the Press Reception at which the prizes will be presented. As an innovation this year, the other artists who entered the competition, but whose work was not selected for display, will be invited by the Society of Wildlife Artists to attend its Private View, which will give them not only the opportunity to mingle with other wildlife artists, but also the opportunity to study the drawings which pipped



THE PJC AWARD winner: Crab-plovers *Dromas ardeola* (George Brown)



Barn Swallows *Hirundo rustica* (Massimiliano Lipperi)



Greenshank *Tringa nebularia* (Anthony Smith)

theirs in the judges' assessments. We greatly welcome this generous gesture by the SWLA, which should be of benefit to many budding bird illustrators.

As well as being displayed for two weeks at The Mall Galleries, the winners' illustrations will be on view in the Art Marquee for the whole of the three days of the British Birdwatching Fair at Rutland Water during 21st-23rd August 1998.



White-tailed Eagles *Haliaeetus albicilla* (Marek Kolodziejczyk)

We shall be delighted to forward letters from any publisher or individual wishing to commission work from artists featured in Bird Illustrator of the Year.

J. T. R. SHARROCK, ROBERT GILLMOR, ALAN HARRIS, BRUCE PEARSON and KEITH SHACKLETON

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OBITUARY

Clive Desmond Hutchinson BA (1949-1998)

In September 1965, an inexperienced and diffident schoolboy spent a week at Cape Clear Bird Observatory. Within the next couple of years, the callow youth had matured into one of Ireland's most reliable observers, his notebooks filled with evocative sketches as well as solid descriptions, and he had been invited to join the Observatory's Council. He loved Cape Clear Island both for its birds and for its people. He became the Observatory's Report Editor in 1970, and then Chairman for 12 years from 1986.

Reliable is perhaps the best single word to describe Clive Hutchinson. If he took on a job, it got done, and done well: both thoroughly and on time. That word is, however, inadequate by itself, for Clive was also the best companion one could select for any trip: not only well organised, but also constantly good-humoured, even when enjoying a good argument (no less than one would expect from a graduate in History and Political Science from Trinity College, Dublin).

Islands were special to Clive. On one visit to the Blasket Islands, stranded (more like abandoned!) for a few extra days and squeezed with two companions into a small two-man tent, argument and debate about the ecology of Ireland's birds filled the many hours sheltering from the Atlantic rain. There was very little room for manoeuvre, either in the tent or in the arguments with Clive.

His chosen career was as a Chartered Accountant in a practice in Cork City. Clive's service to national Irish ornithology, in a wholly amateur capacity, matched that for his county's bird observatory. He was elected to the Council of the Irish Wildbird Conservancy for three terms, in 1969-76, 1979-84 and 1988-91, and was its Treasurer in 1981-84. He took local or national responsibility for several surveys and censuses, including organising the IWC's Wetlands Enquiry in 1971-75, which led to the first of his books, *Ireland's Wetlands and their Birds* (1979). He was a member of the Working Groups



▲ 87. Clive Hutchinson (1949-1998)
(Richard T. Mills)

for both *The Atlas of Wintering Birds in Britain and Ireland* (1980-85) and *The New Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland* (1987-88). He was also the founder and first Editor of the journal *Irish Birds*, for eight years (1977-84), and author of the classic *Birds in Ireland* (1989), still the definitive work, which built on the sound foundations provided by Ussher & Warren's *Birds of Ireland* (1900), Kennedy, Rutledge & Scroope's *Birds of Ireland* (1954) and Rutledge's *Ireland's Birds* (1966). Indeed, despite having no formal biological training, Clive had, in many ways, gradually taken over the mantle from Major R. F. Rutledge (happily, still with us, aged 99) as Ireland's most respected, knowledgeable and prolific ornithologist, with several popular as well as academic books to his name.

A profile of Clive, by John Rochford, was published in 1978 (*Brit. Birds* 71: 305-307).

It is a tragedy for ornithology, as well as for his friends and family, that Clive lived for only 48 years, succumbing to cancer in March 1998. As in the whole of his life, Clive met this with courage and optimism. After his funeral service, a flock of Starlings came in to roost on the high trees over the footpath, calling loudly: it was a sound that Clive loved. We shall miss him as a colleague, as one of Ireland's most distinguished ornithologists and as a generous friend. His achievements, however, and our very fond memories of him, live on. His wife, Rachel, and sons, Andrew and Mark, can temper their sadness with great pride.

JOHN O'HALLORAN and J. T. R. SHARROCK



LOOKING BACK

Twenty-five years ago: 'In its desire to ensure that each species has a distinctive vernacular name that will separate it from allied species in other countries, the Committee on Classification and Nomenclature of the American Ornithologists' Union has decreed that henceforth there shall be Northern Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis*, Northern Shoveler *Anas clypeata*, Black Scoter *Melanitta nigra* and Red Knot *Calidris canutus*. Such a policy has much to commend it. In Britain, however, it is difficult to see who would be prepared to tackle this aspect of terminology, even though we are a major offender in pinning what should be group names on to single species: Storm Petrel, Cormorant, Tcal, Buzzard, Coot, Snipe, Cuckoo, Swift, Swallow, Wren and Wheatear are obvious examples of this British insularity of attitude. [ROBERT HUDSON]'

'Sahara expansion? There has been copious mention in newspapers about human problems resulting from the prolonged drought that is affecting the arid belt south of the Sahara . . . This Sahel Region relies upon a short wet season to provide the water necessary for the maintenance of life, and for several years now these rains have failed: the Sahara Desert is broadening. Whether this trend will continue or be reversed remains to be seen; meanwhile there are grounds for fearing that such changes may have repercussions on European birdlife . . . Could this, for example, be why the Whitethroat [*Sylvia communis*] has failed to recover from its population crash in 1969?' (*Brit. Birds* 66: 315, July 1973)



CONSERVATION RESEARCH NEWS

Compiled by Mark Avery and Andy Evans



This feature, contributed by the RSPB's Research Department, reports the most interesting recent scientific news relevant to the conservation of Western Palearctic species.

Long-term reductions in shell thickness

Recent research has suggested that some birds now find it hard to gather enough calcium to lay eggs of normal thickness (*Brit. Birds* 90: 266), but it is not clear whether this is a recent change, perhaps caused by acid rain reducing calcium availability, or whether some habitats have always been calcium-poor. A recent study by Dr Rhys Green of the RSPB sheds some light on this issue, but also opens up many new avenues for research.

Dr Green weighed and measured the eggs of Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*, Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus*, Blackbird *Turdus merula* and Ring Ouzel *Turdus torquatus* in several museums. The eggs were collected from sites all over Britain as long ago as 1850. The eggshell thickness of all four species (measured indirectly as a ratio of mass to linear dimensions, but also directly for Song Thrush and Blackbird with a specially adapted micrometer) declined gradually through the period 1850-1960. More recently, the data became sparse, because of the legal protection of birds' eggs, but there

was an indication that, in the cases of Song Thrush and Blackbird, shell thickness increased again. The magnitude of the thinning between the late 1800s and 1960, measured directly by micrometer, was 4.3% for Song Thrush and 10.7% for Blackbird. The effect was clear-cut for Song Thrush, Mistle Thrush and Blackbird, even when clutches from the period in which the environment became contaminated with organochlorine pesticides were excluded.

This study does little to establish the mechanism behind this interesting phenomenon, but it does suggest that a range of species may have experienced eggshell thinning throughout most of this century. Future studies are planned to explore whether other species have undergone similar trends and to examine geographical patterns of eggshell thinning. The exciting possibility exists that eggshell thickness will provide a biological marker to reconstruct environmental changes over large geographic areas and long periods of history.

GREEN, R. E. 1998. Long-term decline in the thickness of eggshells of thrushes *Turdus* spp. in Britain. *Proc. Roy. Soc. B* 265: 679-684.

Yellowhammers on the slippery slope?

When things start to go wrong, species can decline in numbers very quickly indeed. When *Birds of Conservation Concern* was compiled, the Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella* was firmly on the Green List (of birds in little danger); two years later it would probably qualify for the Amber List (of species of moderate concern) and in a few years' time it will probably be a candidate for the Red List. A survey by the RSPB in Northern Ireland suggests that the range of the species has declined by two-thirds since the 'New Atlas' was finished in 1991. Why?

Chris Stoate, Steven Moreby and John Szczur of the Game Conservancy Trust (GCT) have shown that breeding Yellowhammers face similar problems to those confronting many other farmland birds. They have demonstrated that Lepidoptera larvae, Araneae and Tipulidae are important components of nestling diet, but that cereal grains are also eaten. Deliberate spraying of hedgerow bottoms with herbicides to control weeds, or accidental spray drift, removes nesting habitat for Yellowhammers, and pesticide use in the crop can reduce food availability for nestlings and adults.

The authors advocate a reduction in pesticide applications around the field margin to preserve nesting habitat and to maintain invertebrate and plant food sources. Provision for such management has been made in a new Arable Stewardship pilot scheme introduced this year by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in East Anglia and

Shropshire, based on GCT/RSPB/English Nature recommendations.

Although very timely, this work does not explain why Yellowhammer populations apparently started to decline over a decade later than did those of most other declining farmland passerines. From what we know of their ecology, it is difficult to understand why they held out for so long.

STOATE, C. S., MOREBY, S. J., & SZCZUR, J. 1998. The ecology of Yellowhammers breeding on farmland. *Bird Study* 45: 109-121.

Dr Mark Avery & Dr Andy Evans, Research Department, RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL



MONTHLY MARATHON



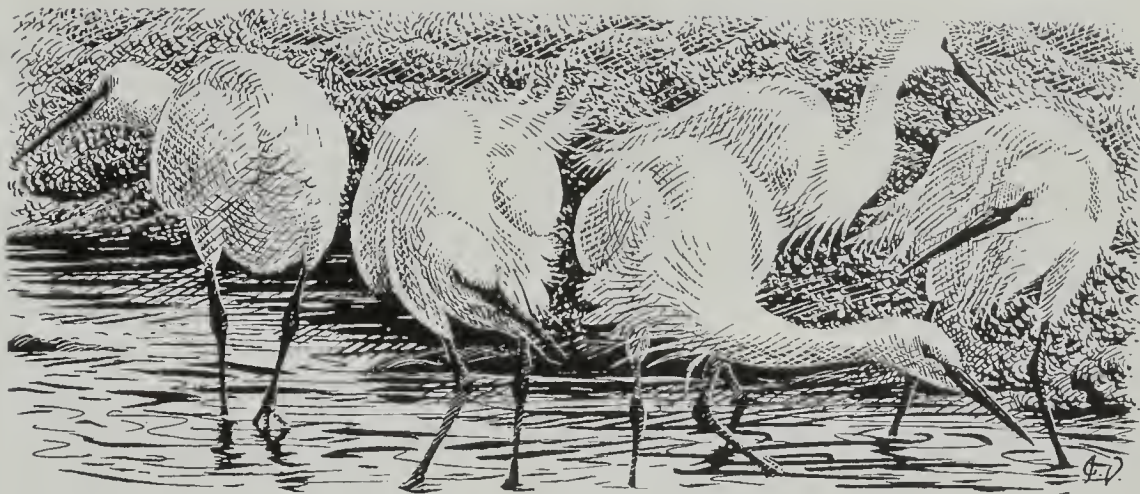
The tenth 'Monthly marathon' has now started, and entrants have until 15th July to send in their April, May and June answers (see plates 42, 49 and 79). The fourth stage appears below (plate 88), for which the deadline is 15th August.

The prize for this tenth competition is once again the opportunity to join a SUNBIRD birdwatching holiday in Africa, America or Asia (the winner will have a choice of several destinations).

The full rules are given on page 305.



▲ 88. 'Monthly marathon.' Photo no. 143. Fourth stage in tenth 'Marathon'. Identify the species. *Read the rules* (see page 305), then send in your answer *on a postcard* to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th August 1998.



The Little Egret in Britain: a successful colonist

Leigh Lock and Kevin Cook

ABSTRACT Following a dramatic change in the level and pattern of occurrence in Britain during the last ten years, the first successful breeding in Britain by Little Egrets *Egretta garzetta* occurred in 1996. On Brownsea Island in Poole Harbour, Dorset, one pair raised three young in 1996, and five pairs reared 12 young in 1997.

This paper describes the background to this colonisation and suggests what future this attractive species may have in Britain.

The Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* is a widespread species in the World, occurring throughout the temperate and tropical latitudes in the Palearctic, African and Oriental regions, and also in Australia. The nominate form occurs in Europe, where it is widely distributed in wetland areas containing abundant foraging habitats. This population was estimated at 30,000 pairs (Hagemeijer & Blair 1997). It is particularly abundant in the lower catchment of the largest rivers—Tagus, Ebro, Rhône, Po, Danube and Volga—and in those coastal areas of Italy, France and Spain which have large lagoons.

Whilst breeding populations and ranges have mainly decreased in eastern Europe, they have increased in Italy, Spain and France.

It is thought that winter mortality may be an important factor affecting Little Egret populations. The majority of European Little Egrets move beyond southern Europe to winter in North Africa in order to avoid harsh conditions. Since the 1950s, however, an increasing number, thought to be about 10% of the total population, overwinters on the European side of the Mediterranean.

The increase in the French and Spanish population and the change in wintering behaviour has seen these egrets spread northwestwards along the Atlantic coast of Europe. In Brittany, wintering birds then began to establish breeding territories in spring, and finally, in 1960, Little Egrets established a regular breeding colony in Brittany, at the Lac de Grandlieu (Bargain 1993).

Although numbers built up during the 1960s, this remained the only Breton colony until 1983, when breeding occurred around Guérande (Bargain 1993). At this time, there was a dramatic increase in the number arriving in late summer—particularly July and August, but extending into October. Many of these birds subsequently spent the winter in the area, benefiting from the mild oceanic climate. Breeding farther north along the coast soon followed, and there was then rapid range expansion along the entire Breton coast through the mid 1980s and early 1990s. The birds moved into Normandy for the first time in 1993, breeding on the Iles Saint Marcout (Spiroux 1995).

Thus, in northwest France during 1983–93, breeding Little Egrets colonised a 600-km section of coast, establishing about 16 colonies and a population of approximately 400 pairs.

The driving force behind the range expansion has been northwesterly post-breeding dispersal, leading birds to overwinter for the first time in new areas, and then to stay on to breed. Bargain & Gelinaud (in press) have suggested, however, that the rapid increase has been aided by the extra protection offered to the species by the EC Birds Directive since 1979.

Status in Britain and Ireland

The level and pattern of occurrence of Little Egrets in Britain has changed dramatically in the last ten years. Fraser, Lansdown & Rogers (1997) showed that, during the 31-year period 1958–88, the average number of Little Egrets in Britain each year was fewer than 15, with a typical pattern of spring vagrancy. This changed abruptly in 1989, when there was an unprecedented early-autumn influx involving at least 40 individuals present in autumn.

Since then, an early-autumn invasion, with a high proportion of individuals overwintering, has become the norm. This annual influx involves several hundred birds, and the total here recently reached in excess of 1,000 individuals present in autumn.

Whilst they were recorded from a large number of localities, concentrations of egrets were occurring mostly on the sheltered South Coast estuaries and bays between Chichester Harbour, West Sussex, in the east and the Isles of Scilly in the west—with particular concentrations in Chichester Harbour, in Poole Harbour, Dorset, and on the Tamar Estuary, Cornwall/Devon, where individual counts of more than 100 have been recorded.

Although, typically, winter flocks disperse in spring, with many egrets presumably migrating south to breeding colonies in continental Europe, there has been an increasing tendency for small numbers of egrets to spend the summer in Britain.

Display, copulation, stick-collection and even nest-building, often in association with existing colonies of Grey Herons *Ardea cinerea*, were reported from a number of South Coast localities as long ago as 1993 (RBBP data) and



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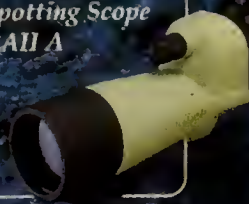
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led to much speculation over exactly when and where Little Egrets would first breed in Britain.

Finally, the first confirmed successful breeding in Britain occurred in 1996, when two sites were occupied. Given the inaccessibility of some other potential nesting sites, however, it is possible that breeding may have occurred previously, but remained unnoticed or unreported. This was followed by further successful breeding at both sites in 1997.

A similar pattern of occurrences has been noted along the south coast of Ireland (Smiddy & Duffy 1997), where Little Egrets bred successfully for the first time in 1997.

Details of range expansion of breeding Little Egrets into northwest Europe are summarised in table 1; details of breeding in Britain are summarised in table 2 (both are on page 277).

An account is given below of the breeding on Brownsea Island, Dorset. Details of the second site, in southwest England, must remain confidential, until it is considered that this colony is fully established and that public knowledge of the site will not compromise the success of the birds at this sensitive stage of their colonisation.



▲ 89. Brownsea Island and lagoon, Dorset (*Kevin Cook*)



▲ 90. Three juvenile Little Egrets *Egretta garzetta* reared on Brownsea Island, Dorset, 1996 (Kevin Cook)

Breeding at Brownsea Island Nature Reserve, Dorset

At 200 ha, Brownsea Island is the largest of the islands in Poole Harbour. Since 1963, The National Trust has opened the island to the public, and the Dorset Wildlife Trust has leased the northern 100 ha as a nature reserve. The most impressive habitat is the lagoon: about 25 ha of open brackish water with surrounding reedbeds and saltmarsh protected from the sea by a seawall. Its water levels are controlled by a pump and sluice to protect its important tern colonies and wader feeding grounds. In winter, it is home to up to 700 Avocets *Recurvirostra avosetta*, over 1,000 Black-tailed Godwits *Limosa limosa* and many other waders. The rest of the island is centred around a wet valley of lakes, carr and reedbed. Rising from this are dry, sandy hills, largely cloaked in woodland of Scots Pine *Pinus sylvestris*, with dense thickets of Rhododendron *Rhododendron ponticum* or cleared areas beneath.

Early records of Little Egrets in Poole Harbour included singles in 1940, 1946 and 1961. In 1988, however, along with their colleagues in other southern counties, local bird-counters noted a steady increase of Little Egrets in the Harbour with up to four being seen regularly. Little Egrets were soon also noted inland, up river valleys, but the Harbour, with over 3,500 ha of open water, tidal creeks and mudflats, saw the largest roosts on evenings in late summer.

In the Harbour, 16 Little Egrets were recorded in July 1992, 32 in 1993, 85 in 1994 and 110 in 1995. The egrets regularly fed in the Brownsea lagoon and some roosted there overnight. Maximum numbers generally occurred during July to November, with smaller numbers throughout the rest of the year. Numbers on the lagoon peaked in 1994, with 52 on one July evening,

Table 1. Northwest European records of breeding Little Egrets *Egretta garzetta*.

- 1. There is also a one-off breeding record from the Loire Valley in 1989 (Guermeur & Monnat 1980).
- 2. Philippe J. Dubois *in litt*.
- 3. Smiddy & Duffy (1997).

Location	Year of first confirmed breeding	Number of colonies in 1997	1997 population (pairs)
Brittany	1960 ¹	18+	500+
Normandy	1993	4 ²	120 ²
Picardie	1996	2 ²	42 ²
Britain	1996	2	7
Ireland	1997	1 ³	12 ³

Table 2. Numbers of breeding Little Egrets *Egretta garzetta* in Britain, 1996-97.

Site	1996		1997	
	Nests	No. young	Nests	No. young
Brownsea Island	1	3	5	12
Site X	1	2	2	2

but then a slow decline was noted, with 43 in 1995 and only 28 in 1996, and very few seen at other seasons. It did not look as if Brownsea was going to attract the Little Egret as a breeding species as we had thought.

They were, however, first suspected of breeding on the island when strange guttural noises were heard coming from a secluded treetop* in 1996. Some weeks later, the assistant warden, Giles Strother, saw a Little Egret nest-building and later sitting, and the staff then kept a daily watch on the site, though it was extremely difficult to confirm fully whether this was a definite breeding attempt or just a roost, as the egrets left the nest at the slightest disturbance. Up to 12 individuals would roost there from about 20.00 GMT onwards. There were probably two pairs attempting to breed, with the earlier one succeeding. About 30 days after first hearing the birds, suspicions were confirmed as the warden, Kevin Cook, saw the fluffy feathering of four egret nestlings (one later perished)*.

The nest was smaller than that of a Grey Heron and, as the young egrets grew, they moved onto nearby branches where they waited for the return of their parents. Feeding was noisy, but quick, with adults feeding the young on shrimps and small fish caught nearby. About a month later, the nestlings had fledged. After they left the nest site, they stayed together as a family group, being seen on the lagoon or roosting on a nearby lake. Keen-eyed birdwatchers would have noted the two adults with three young, the latter lacking the adults' characteristic feathers and yellow feet, but people are used to seeing Little Egrets and no-one ever mentioned this to us.

The second year, 1997, was a repeat of the first, though we feared initially that the egrets would not try again as even fewer were seen around the island. The nesting site was some distance away from that of 1996, and was even

*Details of the nesting-tree species and the date of fledging have been omitted deliberately at this crucial stage in the species' colonisation.

more difficult to spot, the nests being in the canopy about 15-20 m away, with very poor access. There was some difficulty in making a nest-count, but eventually it was agreed that five pairs were nesting, probably yielding 12 young.

Unfortunately, to preserve its seclusion, visitors to the reserve will not be shown the nest site. There are, however, hides overlooking the lagoon, where egrets may occasionally be seen feeding. The island is open from April to September, with the reserve accessible by nature trails (guided tours only in July and August).

The future in Britain

Given the range expansion into northwest France, the colonisation of Britain by Little Egrets has been expected for a number of years. Early indications, particularly from Brownsea, are that they are able to breed successfully and that the population may be able to expand quickly, much in the way that it has done in France. The build-up of breeding numbers in Normandy has been phenomenal: an increase of over 100 pairs in three years (see table 3). Also, in Ireland, a colony of 12 breeding pairs was established in 1997, at a site where only one summering individual was present in 1996 (Smiddy & Duffy 1997). Breeding success would also appear to be good—2.6 young per pair in Ireland and 2.4 young per pair in Dorset—comparing favourably with productivity recorded in Camargue in southern France (2.4 fledged young per pair: Voisin 1991).

Table 3. Numbers of breeding Little Egrets *Egretta garzetta* in Normandy (1993-97) (Debout 1997; Philippe J. Dubois *in litt.*)

Year	Number of sites	Number of pairs
1993	2	9
1994	2	30
1995	3	110
1996	3	120
1997	4	120

Outside the breeding season, Little Egrets occupy a large number of sites which could also support breeding pairs. In Brittany and Normandy, a variety of nesting habitats has been used—most frequently high up in broadleaved or coniferous trees, but also low down within reedbed or scrub, and even on rocky islands amongst Tree Mallow *Lavateria arborea*. Many egret colonies are associated with breeding Grey Herons and both British breeding sites and the single Irish breeding site involve tree-nesting egrets associating with heronries. Some egret colonies are isolated from other herons, and on islands the egrets are associated with nesting seabirds. Given such a catholic choice of breeding habitats, lack of suitable sites is unlikely to be a limiting factor and one could expect egrets to have the potential to breed much more widely in southern England.

The British and Irish wintering population is the most northerly in the World. Severity of winter weather and high winter mortality could be a factor affecting future breeding success and limiting colonisation to the north and

east. Experience to date in Brittany suggests, however, that, although prolonged cold spells such as those in 1984/85, 1986/87 and 1996/97 can result in high mortality (e.g. 60% of individuals at Croisic in 1997: Bargain & Gelinaud in press), this has not had a long-term effect on the breeding population, which has continued to increase dramatically.

Protection and management of key wetland sites are essential if further colonisation is to occur, and sites of national importance, including all breeding sites, should be afforded statutory protection. For non-breeding sites (given a population peaking at about 1,000 individuals), about ten birds would represent a 1% level, indicating national importance. As a minimum of 50 individuals is, however, generally accepted for defining sites of national importance, this could also be applied to Little Egrets. Given such criteria, a number of coastal sites in southern England would meet national-importance criteria for non-breeding Little Egrets (e.g. Gannel/Camel, north Cornwall; the Tamar complex, Cornwall/Devon; Teign, Devon; Poole Harbour, Dorset; Langstone/Chichester Harbour complex, Hampshire/West Sussex).

The potential effects of disturbance are unknown, but, particularly during the early critical stages of colonisation, it is essential to adopt a precautionary approach and to seek to keep all current and potential breeding sites free from disturbance. Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act also needs revision to offer full legal protection to this species.

It would seem, therefore, that, if egrets are given adequate protection from disturbance, particularly during the breeding season, they are likely to flourish in southern England in coming decades.

Whilst the precise effects of climate change are difficult to predict and a number of scenarios have been proposed, mild winters would be likely to encourage further overwintering, and increasingly warm summers would be suitable for breeding. If these occur, there may be even greater range expansion, and the Little Egret may become a familiar breeding species along the South Coast, possibly being joined by other southern European species (e.g. Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*), before too long.

Acknowledgments

Thanks to Pat Smiddy, who provided updated information from Ireland; Philippe J. Dubois, who provided updated information from Brittany and Normandy; and the Dorset Bird Club for background information on Poole Harbour. Thanks also to Dr Ken Smith, who commented on an earlier draft.

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NOTES

These contributions have all been assessed by the eight members of either the Behaviour Notes Panel or the Identification Notes Panel.

Display of Fulmar in presence of Great Skua

On 8th August 1994, at sea off Cornwall, one of a group of about 12 Fulmars *Fulmarus glacialis* on the water was seen to lower its head and raise its tail and wings vertically in an apparent threat or aggressive display not unlike that of an owl (Strigidae) or the 'cat display' of a Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*. After watching this for about one minute, I noticed a Great Skua *Catharacta skua* circling overhead. The skua remained for about five minutes, throughout which the Fulmar continued the display, even when the skua was distant; on one occasion, the skua landed and drifted to within 2 m of the group, but at no point did the displaying Fulmar spit or lunge at it (although, when the skua had left, it lurched at and drove off another Fulmar). No other Fulmar in the group gave this display, although one individual of a loose group of three about 200 m away did so for about one minute.

The Fulmar's displays at the nest site are well recorded, but those at sea appear to be less well known.

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EDITORIAL COMMENT A very similar aggressive display at sea, again in the presence of a Great Skua, was described by T. R. Evans (*Brit. Birds* 44: 107), but in that instance the Fulmar held its head back almost between its wings.

White Stork with Blue-cheeked Bee-eater in bill

On 14th September 1994, at the Fujairah National Dairy Farm at Dibba, United Arab Emirates, five White Storks *Ciconia ciconia* were feeding on grasshoppers in a newly cut field. Several hundred Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters *Merops superciliosus* were also present, perching on water-sprinklers and making occasional forays over the fields to catch insects, which were either consumed in flight or brought back to the perch; they often flew very close to the storks, but it was unclear whether they were taking advantage of insects disturbed into flight by the storks. One of us (EH) then saw a stork with a struggling Blue-cheeked Bee-eater in its bill, and alerted Michel Fouquet, Olivier Girard, Jan Lontowski, Michael Skakuj and TS. The bee-eater was held midway along the stork's bill, gripped diagonally across the body, and was flapping its wings in an attempt to escape. The stork did nothing for a few seconds, then shook its head back and opened its bill slightly, as if to move the bee-eater closer to its mouth; as it did so, however, the bee-eater flew away, apparently unharmed, and settled on a perch with feathers ruffled. Unfortunately, we did not see the capture, and no further attempts by any of the storks to catch bee-eaters were observed.

BWP (vol. 1) does not mention birds (apart from a domestic chicken) in the diet of White Stork, and we are unsure whether the Blue-cheeked Bee-eater was intended as food, was caught by accident or was attacked simply because it was annoying the stork.

We thank Dr Ibrahim Zaki for allowing us access to the farm. We also thank the sponsors of the Abu Dhabi Shorebird Project, in which we took part: ETISALAT, ADMA-OPCO, ADCO, LOT Polish Airlines, TOTAL oil company, and the Al Fahim Group. Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan and Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak al Nahyan were most helpful in assisting the project.

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Successful hybridisation between Ruddy Shelduck and Egyptian Goose

On 9th June 1991, a male Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea* arrived at Rutland Water, Leicestershire. It remained until 1st September and during this period was sometimes observed associating with an Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiacus*. What was presumed to be the same male Ruddy Shelduck returned in early 1992 and since then has been more or less resident. Each breeding season, it has paired with a female Egyptian Goose, but in the years 1992-95 no offspring were recorded so the pairing was assumed to be infertile. In 1996, the male Ruddy Shelduck again paired with a female Egyptian Goose (presumed to be the same individual as in previous years), and this time they were successful: two small downy young (less than a week old) were first seen accompanying the parents on 18th May; they remained with the parents until at least 25th June, but by mid July had left them and joined a flock of Egyptian Geese which included several juveniles.

The downy young most closely resembled the downy young of Ruddy Shelduck as portrayed in *BWP*: they appeared more black-and-white than downy young Egyptian Geese, their dark crowns extended down to eye-level (i.e. they lacked pale supercilia), and they had discrete whitish oval patches at the sides of the mantle and rump. Once fully grown and in juvenile plumage, they still superficially resembled Ruddy Shelducks: their eyes and bills were dark; the legs of one bird were grey, those of the other more flesh-coloured; their heads were greyer than normal for Ruddy Shelduck, and seemed more like male Cape Shelduck *T. cana*; their body plumage was duller than normal for Ruddy Shelduck, with grey mottling on the flanks and buffish undertail-coverts, more like Egyptian Goose; and the white greater coverts lacked the black subterminal line shown by Egyptian Goose, but had greyish tips.

There are previous records of hybrids between Ruddy Shelduck and Common Shelduck *T. tadorna* (e.g. Gillham & Gillham 1996; Judith Smith *in litt.*), but, so far as I know, this is the first time that hybridisation with Egyptian Goose has been recorded. It is particularly notable that it occurred between wild-living escaped/introduced birds, and that the offspring superficially resembled Ruddy Shelducks.

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Reference

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Eurasian Sparrowhawk entering building

In the coastal sand-dunes north of St Annes, Lancashire, a large derelict building (formerly a children's holiday home) holds a good population of domesticated Rock Doves *Columba livia*. Sufficient ridge and roof tiles are missing to allow a reasonable amount of light into the attic space.

On the morning of 11th January 1995, in sunny weather with a cool north wind, I saw a female Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* fly to the building and perch on the top of a spiral outer staircase. After about 30 seconds, it flew up the slope of the roof and quickly dropped into the attic; it had not emerged after ten minutes. At 10.15 GMT on 5th February 1995, in cool weather with sunny spells and a light southwest wind, I observed the same behaviour; on this occasion, the hawk was apparently still inside after 30 minutes, although it may possibly have emerged on the far side. On neither date was the raptor chasing prey.

I can find no reference to Eurasian Sparrowhawks deliberately entering buildings.

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EDITORIAL COMMENT Prof. Ian Newton has commented: 'I have seen Eurasian Sparrowhawks enter buildings several times, but do not know of any written record. The most surprising occurrence was of an adult male which roosted for several nights inside an occupied cow byre, where the farmer saw it catch a sparrow *Passer*. A friend photographed it roosting on a rafter, where it is clearly identifiable as an adult male.'

Lanner Falcon robbing Black Kite

On 17th August 1993, at Tarquinia rubbish-tip, Lazio, Italy, I saw a juvenile Lanner Falcon *Falco biarmicus* attack a Black Kite *Milvus migrans* which was feeding in the air on an object held in its talons. The kite dropped the object, and the falcon swooped below, caught it and carried it off (fig. 1). I saw the same behaviour again on 20th August, but this time the kite did not release its food and the two raptors locked talons; they fell together from the sky at increasing speed, parting only just before reaching the ground (fig. 2a & 2b).

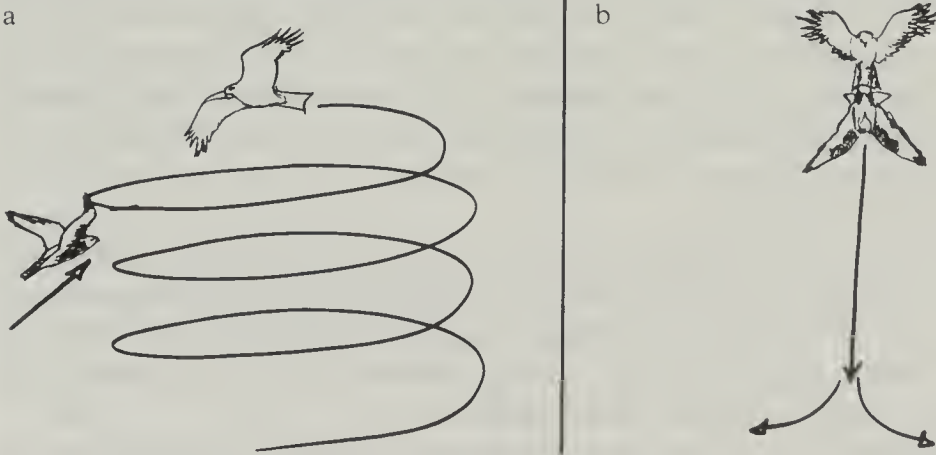
ROBERTO GILDI

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EDITORIAL COMMENT Although food-piracy by Lanner Falcons has been recorded before (*BWP* vol. 2), Roberto Gildi's drawings illustrate this behaviour particularly well.



Figs. 1 & 2. Interactions between Lanner Falcon *Falco biarmicus* and Black Kites *Milvus migrans*: above, on 17th August 1993; below, on 20th August 1993 (Roberto Gildi)



White-rumped Sandpipers in Britain and Ireland

Speculation as to why so many White-rumped Sandpipers *Calidris fuscicollis* appear on the east coast of Britain has occupied various analysts over the years. In 1971, Dr J. T. R. Sharrock suggested that they were birds which had

crossed the Atlantic during a previous season and were now undertaking a north-south migration from Northern Europe, with the implication that, although insufficient data were available, they were mostly adults (*Brit. Birds* 64: 93-103). Subsequently, Sharrock & Sharrock (1976) used data up to 1972 to put the proportion of British records occurring on the East Coast at 22%, revised later to 39%, based on data up to 1985, by Dymond *et al.* (1989). Currently (as at the end of 1996, including Irish records up to 1995), the proportion stands at 25%, including records from Kent to Hampshire and from the inland counties of Leicestershire, Northamptonshire and Surrey, but excluding Orkney and Shetland.

One aspect which has hitherto eluded comment, however, is the statement in *BWP* that, in the Gulf of St Lawrence, Canada, there is a clearly defined adult passage from 21st July to 8th September, males predominating. Vagrants appear regularly in the Azores at this time, and have included a flock of 48 adults, on 28th August 1990 (*Ardeola* 39: 78). Of the records on the eastern side of Britain, 57% fall within this period, whereas in the West it is only 24%. After 8th September, when fresh arrivals from across the Atlantic might be expected, the proportion in the West increases to 62%, whilst that in the East decreases to 25%.

Establishing a bird's age became a regular practice only after 1977. Since then, the vast majority of summer-month records in the east of Britain have related to adults, as would be expected. Indeed, in the East, only 14 have ever been identified as juvenile or 'immature', all subsequent to 14th September, but mostly from 26th September onwards. The earliest juvenile recorded in Britain to date was on Deerness, Orkney, on 8th September 1996, the very year in which nine adults turned up during the summer period. Could it be that all the adults had spent the breeding season in Northern Europe and the Deerness juvenile had actually been reared there?

The geographical distribution of records in the East is also interesting. There have been only 12 on the east coast of Scotland (eight during the period 30th July to 20th August), whereas East Anglia and Kent have accounted for no fewer than 74, the vast majority having been in Norfolk. This implies that, if North Sea crossings have been taking place, they have been well to the south rather than by the relatively shorter crossing from northern Scandinavia to Scotland. Only two summer-month adults have ever been identified in Shetland and none in Orkney.

The data for the east of Britain do not and can not, of course, take into account the very real possibility of repeat visits by some individuals, perhaps over a period of several years. No longevity data for this species are given in *BWP*, but the oldest known Dunlin *C. alpina*, admittedly a rather more robust species, is given as 19 years and nine months.

For all that, there is scant evidence of any return passage in the spring, the only records having been in West Glamorgan in March 1970, Scilly in mid June 1978, Lothian in May 1980, Kent in April 1986 and Norfolk at the end of June 1989. It may be that, as Vinicombe (in Vinicombe & Cottridge 1996) speculated, they find a different route back north, or in some cases succeed in returning to North America.

Another seeming anomaly, and one which is likely to remain unresolved, is that, despite intensive coverage at favourable feeding localities on the East Coast over the years, the annual number of records has varied widely. It may be, of course, that North Sea crossings are purely a matter of chance. Nor does there appear to be any correlation between the number of juveniles arriving anywhere in Britain in autumn and the number of adults in the East during the following summer. Some day, perhaps, a pair will be found breeding somewhere in Northern Europe and all will be light.

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Aggressive behaviour of Caspian Terns towards herons

During May and June 1994, at Lake Bemamba, western Madagascar, we made daily observations of waterbirds using a daytime roost in shallow water at an exposed sandbar. A flock of 20-50 Caspian Terns *Sterna caspia* roosted at the water's edge, leaving for the coast about 10 km away at nightfall and returning around dawn (05.55 hours). Arriving terns often presented cichlid fish (*Tilapia*) to others, and copulations were seen.

Throughout the period of our observations, arriving or departing Caspian Terns often flew low over the water, apparently aiming at herons feeding or sleeping nearby. They quite obviously aligned their flight to include 'heron-startling', managing to pick out single herons in the area. Grey Herons *Ardea cinerea* and Great White Egrets *Egretta alba* were targeted most regularly, with Purple Herons *A. purpurea* and Humblot's Herons *A. humbloti* also harassed. The terns flew at a heron's head, either approaching at head height or swooping down at the last moment. Adult herons ducked down under the flying tern, often snapping their bill in response; juveniles, on the other hand, became very excitable, rushing about and leaping into the air. This behaviour was observed on many occasions and was repeated each day. Introduced *Tilapia* fish are abundant at Bemamba, and no aggression or interspecific competition among fish-eating birds was observed elsewhere.

BWP (vol. 2) describes a Merlin *Falco columbarius* making early-morning visits to a gathering of Carrion Crows *Corvus corone* in order to fly through them, causing panic and forcing several to the ground without attempting a kill.

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Redwing taking flesh from dead Greenfinch

At 12.00 GMT on 26th October 1994, while carrying out my usual 'birding rounds' aboard the *British Petroleum* platform 'Buchan Alpha' in the Central Sector of the North Sea (at 57°54'14"N, 00°01'55"E), I saw a single Redwing *Turdus iliacus* and a Fieldfare *T. pilaris*, and the remains of several Greenfinches *Carduelis chloris* which had been killed by a Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*. On approaching the Redwing to within 3 m, I saw that it was feeding from the detached wing of a Greenfinch; the thrush pecked and shook several small pieces of flesh from the wing, which had been severed at the shoulder, and ate them.

PAUL F. BAKER

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EDITORIAL COMMENT This individual was presumably stressed, but, as Derek Goodwin has pointed out, starving and stressed Redwings usually refuse foods new to them, even when other thrushes are eating these.

Large roost of Common Chiffchaffs in Spain

Although communal winter roosts of Common Chiffchaffs *Phylloscopus collybita* have been described (*BWP* vol. 6), they are not well known.

In winter 1990/91, a roost of Common Chiffchaffs was discovered at the Biological Station of the Canal Vell in the Natural Park of the Ebro Delta, northeast Spain. It was situated in two rows of *Myoporum tenuifolium* bushes up to 3.5 m tall bordering a 188-m-long path. The surrounding vegetation consists mainly of Common Reeds *Phragmites australis* and a patch of Glasswort *Arthrocnemum fruticosum* saltmarsh. During the winters from 1990 to 1993, these roosting warblers were located with flashlights and caught by hand. The results showed that the roost began to form in December and remained occupied until mid March. In each winter, the maximum number of individuals was found between mid January and early February: 108 birds on 18th January 1991, 111 on 8th February 1992, and 116 on 22nd January 1993. Ringing also revealed that some individuals used the same roost during the three years in which samplings were made, suggesting a degree of winter site fidelity.

The Natural Park of the Ebro Delta facilitated the monitoring, and the Grup Català d'Anellament partly financed the study. L. M. Copete, R. Mariné, J. Solans and R. Vidal assisted in catching and ringing the birds. B. Weitzmann translated the manuscript.

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Long-tailed Tits feeding on peanuts

On 4th January 1998, we saw a single Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus* feeding on peanuts in a wire frame suspended from an apple tree at Bramley,

near Basingstoke, Hampshire. The bird was soon joined by others of its group and up to four were seen feeding simultaneously on the peanuts. Later during the same day, two Long-tailed Tits returned to the food source suggesting that it had become a regular feeding station. When one Long-tailed Tit was feeding, a Blue Tit *Parus caeruleus* fed opposite, undisturbed. The presence of four Long-tailed Tits feeding together seemed, however, to deter up to three Blue Tits, which had arrived close by and perched in the tree, from approaching the nuts. A single Long-tailed Tit was again feeding at the same source of peanuts on 28th January: it fed in the company of a Blue Tit for two minutes when they were on opposite sides of the container, but, when they came face to face, the Long-tailed Tit fled. This also occurred when during another feeding visit it encountered a Great Tit *Parus major*. The Long-tailed Tit was undeterred, however, and returned to feed alone, pecking into the nuts vigorously and continued when joined by two Blue Tits. Although Long-tailed Tits are known to take seeds and breadcrumbs from birdtables (BWP vol. 7), we are not aware of accounts of their taking peanuts, a habit which may soon, perhaps, become widespread.

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EDITORIAL COMMENT Peanuts in hanging containers have been provided at Fountains, Blunham, Bedfordshire, for the past 21 years. Long-tailed Tits have been almost daily visitors to the garden throughout that period, but visited the nut-containers for the first time only in winter 1995/96 (on a handful of occasions); their visits became regular in 1996/97, and by 1997/98 had become as frequent as those of Blue and Great Tits. The significance of this for a species previously relying mainly on invertebrate prey, and consequently subject to heavy mortality in prolonged spells of freezing weather, is obvious. The change in habit at this one site is very recent and very striking. For a more-considered, national view, we have invited David Glue (BTO Research Department—Nest Records & Garden Birds) to comment in detail (see below).

Peanuts as a winter food source for Long-tailed Tits

Long-tailed Tits *Aegithalos caudatus* have taken peanut fragments from hanging baskets in gardens for at least 35 years, though the habit has increased substantially in recent decades, most strikingly in the early 1990s. Edwin Cohen (Sway, Hampshire) advocated breaking up peanut kernels using a mincing machine (designed to process meat products), a ploy he used to good effect during the severe 1962/63 winter to attract Long-tailed Tits to the birdtable. This method was also used successfully by me at Dibden Purlieu (Hampshire) in 1968, at Virginia Water (Surrey) in the 'late 1960s' (per Douglas Carr) and at East Boldre (Hampshire, per Norman Pullen). The BTO started its long-running Garden Bird Feeding Survey (GBFS) in winter 1970/71, at which point Long-tailed Tits were seen to be taking supplementary foods of some type in an average of 11% of the gardens

sampled over the first decade. In winter 1971/72, observers were asked to list the range of food items they provided and subjectively to assess their status as ‘preferred’, ‘regular’ or ‘occasionally taken’ materials for visiting birds (Glue 1982). The countrywide scatter of 620 gardens covered was boosted to 980 over the following two winters. Long-tailed Tits were watched taking supplementary foods at 132 of these feeding stations. Key food items found to be ‘preferred’ or ‘regular’ included fat, suet, meat fragments from bones, small seeds (often oat meal) and less often peanut fragments, crumbs of cheese and bread. The ‘preferred’ feeding positions employed were on hanging containers and raised surfaces (tables and benches), and only occasionally the ground.

Interestingly, a scattering of observers noted the unobtrusive way in which Long-tailed Tits might monopolise the feeding station: ‘Oddly enough, although this is the smallest of the birdtable visitors (if we exclude the tail), the sight of a dozen Long-tailed Tits around the edge of a feeding tray seems to have an inhibiting effect on other birds, and they are usually allowed to stay until they are satisfied’ (Glue 1982).

Long-tailed Tits maintained a regular, if variable, level of attendance at the cross-section of UK gardens sampled throughout the 1980s. It was during the early 1990s that the numbers of birds coming, and the proportion of birdtables patronised, increased relatively sharply (table 1), endorsing comments made by discerning birdwatchers at large. Initial increases during winter 1993/94 and 1995/96 were in part attributed to larger flock sizes following on from productive breeding seasons in the UK. Not so, though, in winter 1996/97, when Long-tailed Tits reached all-time-high attendance levels at GBFS feeding stations, despite the abysmal nesting season, the legacy of a destructive cold late spring with damaging frosts and rains in April and May. Clearly, Long-tailed Tits have located, and are increasingly exploiting, supplementary foodstuffs at garden feeding stations. It seems likely that this is due, at least in part, to the recently improved diversity of seed-mixes (including black sunflower hearts) available from wildbird-food dispensers, and including the availability of peanuts in a popular ‘granular’ form, more easily assimilated by small-billed species such as the Long-tailed Tit. Local observations suggest that this species is quick to copy fresh forms of behaviour and utilise new food types provided. Though Long-tailed Tits are not long-distance travellers, BTO ringers have shown not only how flocks increase in size over the late autumn and winter periods, but also that there is an interchange of individuals between flocks. Clearly, any learned forms of behaviour may be copied quickly and spread widely, as happened with Blue Tits *Parus caeruleus* (and other tit species) and the expansion of milk-bottle-top opening (Fisher & Hinde 1949;

Table 1. Percentage of BTO Garden Bird Feeding Survey stations attracting Long-tailed Tits *Aegithalos caudatus* to supplementary foods from winters 1992/93 to 1996/97.

	1992/93	1993/94	1994/95	1995/96	1996/97
% of gardens	24	37	33	44	45

Cramp *et al.* 1960). The beneficial impact that this relatively new form of food may have on a small passerine vulnerable to cold weather, especially glazed-ice conditions, is deserving of further study.

DAVID GLUE

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Anting behaviour of Rooks

Around midday on 12th September 1994, at Cadover Bridge, near Plympton, Devon, I stopped to observe a group of Rooks *Corvus frugilegus* feeding on a grassy bank by the road. After a few minutes, one of them moved on to a sandy area beneath some taller vegetation, where it spread its wings. At first I thought that it was simply enjoying the warmth of the sun, but it soon began picking up ants from the surrounding ground and placing these between the feathers of its breast and between those of its axillaries. Almost immediately, it was joined by a juvenile Rook; a tussle for space ensued, before the two settled and proceeded to pick up ants and place them between not only their own but also each other's feathers. A few minutes later, a further half-dozen Rooks had joined the two on the bank, and all began anting in the same way. There was much jostling between adults for the best places, with individuals in bodily contact when they placed ants on each other; the juveniles, when close to the adults, had ants placed between their feathers. In all cases, ants were placed in the breast feathers and the axillaries, but the way in which the Rooks nestled close to the ground made it likely that ants were climbing between most of the feathers of the belly and flanks. The juveniles appeared to be mimicking the adults, but how many ants they actually picked up was questionable. The behaviour continued for approximately five minutes, until a sudden noise caused all the Rooks to fly back across the road, where they resumed feeding. The ants were later identified by entomologists at the University of Plymouth, Devon, as Black Garden Ants *Lasius niger*, a species abundant throughout Britain.

SARA MCMAHON

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EDITORIAL COMMENT The communal nature of this incident is interesting, while the apparent anting of one bird by another seems extraordinary. Derek Goodwin has commented: '... there seem few records of Rooks anting in the wild. I've never seen free Rooks anting (so far as I can recall), though often Carrion Crows *Corvus corone* and sometimes Eurasian Jays *Garrulus glandarius*, and I've never kept Rooks in captivity.' In a major review of the anting behaviour of passerines (*Brit. Birds* 50: 401-424), Dr K. E. L. Simmons stated for the Rook: 'Both main forms of anting [active and passive] noted in the wild and in captivity'.



LETTERS

Grants for conservation

I was pleased to see that the grant that Norfolk Wildlife Trust has been awarded from the Heritage Lottery Fund for restoration at Hickling Broad was considered to be worthy of mention in 'News and comment' (*Brit. Birds* 91: 69).

The point made (that grants should cover running costs and maintenance as well as capital expenditure) is completely valid in essence, and we would be delighted if there were some funding available for ongoing expenses. The article was, however, somewhat misleading, as it implied that we are building a new visitor centre, whereas we are investing in much-needed improvements to our existing centre. Similarly, the hides we are building replace existing hides which are now at the end of their service, and the proposed tree tower will replace an existing structure. The vast majority of the funding is going into habitat restoration work, and, in that respect, wildlife has definitely come first. It does need to be remembered, however, that we are very dependent on the people who visit the reserve, because it is their support, donations and membership that subsidise our ongoing running costs. It is only right, therefore, that we provide good and appropriate facilities for visitors.

BRENDAN JOYCE

Director, Norfolk Wildlife Trust, 72 Cathedral Close, Norwich NR1 4DF

Cattle Egrets using roads for navigation

Jacques Franchimont (*Brit. Birds* 90: 385) reaffirmed his view (*Brit. Birds* 86: 17, commented on by Chris Mead, *Brit. Birds* 86: 375-376) that Cattle Egrets *Bubulcus ibis* in Morocco use roads as navigation aids while moving to roost.

On the island-city of Abu Dhabi, capital of the United Arab Emirates, there has been a steady increase in the number of wintering Cattle Egrets since the early 1990s. They are usually to be found in the city's parks and gardens during the day, flying to a fixed roost in a stand of mangroves *Avicennia marina* on the eastern side of the island at dusk.

On 5th January 1996, I was inspecting a small pool at Abu Dhabi International Airport, located on the adjacent mainland 25 km from the egrets' roost. Shortly before sunset, I noticed a flock of 74 Cattle Egrets flying fast above the trees lining the approach road to the airport, and apparently following the main road towards the city. Pursuing them in my car (at some risk to myself and other drivers), I followed the birds down the road.

At a flyover junction, the birds flew upwards to pass over the flyover, turning right to follow the main road towards the city. They continued to fly just above the height of the central street lights, rising upwards over several crossing road bridges, until they reached the bridge providing access to the island. At this point, they swung slightly right to follow the eastern coast of the island. Thanks to the proximity of the coastal road to the coast itself, I was able to observe the birds almost uninterrupted until they arrived at the main roost in the mangroves.

The distance flown by the birds was approximately 35 km, significantly longer than the direct route from the airport to the roost, and also, incidentally, much farther than the distance of 'up to 10 km' cited by Franchimont as that flown by Cattle Egrets to roost in Morocco.

In a mid-winter, cloudy Abu Dhabi, the tarmac of the main roads is unlikely to provide much more in the way of warm air rising to assist the Cattle Egrets in flight than the *sabkha* salt-flats adjacent to the main road followed by the birds. I suggest that there is little doubt that the birds I observed were, in fact, using the road as a navigational aid, at least until the point when they had the option of choosing between a road and the coastline. At that point, they plumped for the adjacent coast.

PETER HELLYER

PO Box 791, Abu Dhabi, UAE

Cliff-nesting Cattle Egrets

When I read with interest the note on cliff-nesting Cattle Egrets *Bubulcus ibis* (*Brit. Birds* 91: 107), I recalled seeing what I assume was the same nest-site near Lagos, Portugal, during a boat trip which my wife and I took on 23rd May 1987. My notes record 'About 500 Little [*Egretta garzetta*] and Cattle Egrets at breeding colony on cliffs—Little outnumbering Cattle by about 4 to 1'.

STEPHEN B. EDWARDS

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Cliff-nesting Cattle Egrets

Concerning the recent note on this subject (*Brit. Birds* 91: 107), it is worth pointing out that nesting on cliffs is well known in the Algarve. Vowles & Vowles (1994, *Breeding Birds of the Algarve*) specifically noted the Ponta de Piedade colony and also mentioned that most colonies in the Algarve are situated on sea stacks, although the species also uses reedbeds and trees.

RAE VERNON

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Cliff-nesting Cattle Egrets

A recent issue (*Brit. Birds* 91: 107) referred to Cattle Egrets *Bubulcus ibis* nesting on cliffs at Ponta de Piedade, near Lagos, in the Algarve, Portugal, in April 1988. The tone of the note and the subsequent editorial comment implied that this was previously unrecorded behaviour. There is, however, a well-known and well-established colony of cliff-nesting Cattle Egrets at Tajo de Barbate, near Cape Trafalgar, Andalucia, Spain. The colony has probably been in existence since the last century, and E. F. J. Garcia (*in litt.*) estimates that there are over 2,000 pairs of Cattle Egrets, together with about 40 pairs of Little Egrets *Egretta garzetta*.

NEIL MONEY

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MYSTERY PHOTOGRAPHS

214 Yellow-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus americanus* and Black-billed Cuckoo *C. erythrophthalmus* breed throughout much of the USA and in southern Canada. In autumn, when both species migrate to their winter quarters in South America, individuals occasionally cross the Atlantic, and have appeared in several European countries. Up to the end of 1996, 61 Yellow-billed Cuckoos and 13 Black-billed Cuckoos had been recorded in Britain and Ireland; all were in autumn and early winter, with most in October. These occurrences have clearly been influenced to a greater degree by the more easterly autumn migration route of many Yellow-billed Cuckoos, which involves a lengthy ocean crossing, than by the more northerly breeding range of many Black-billed Cuckoos.

The complete post-juvenile moult of both cuckoos starts on the breeding grounds and is then suspended, to be resumed after autumn migration, during which, though the state of moult is very variable among individuals, the flight-feathers and tail-feathers are always retained juvenile feathers. For the purposes of this text, an individual in active or suspended post-juvenile moult is referred to as a 'first-winter'. Mystery photograph A, taken by Philip Jones, shows a first-winter Yellow-billed Cuckoo in Surrey in October 1991, while mystery photograph B, taken by Brian Walker, shows a first-winter Black-billed Cuckoo in Cheshire in October 1982.

Both species are smaller and proportionally slimmer and shorter-winged than the familiar Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*. Comparing the two, Yellow-billed Cuckoo averages the larger and has marginally longer and more pointed wings and a slightly longer and deeper bill with a more markedly decurved tip. Black-billed Cuckoo is the more slender of the pair, with the longer and more strongly graduated tail. Such distinctions are, however, of little use in the field.

The strikingly two-toned bill of Yellow-billed Cuckoo is dark horn to dark grey and lemon-yellow to bright yellow; normally, the yellow extends along the basal half to two-thirds of the cutting edges of the upper mandible and covers all but the tip of the lower mandible. The more subtly two-toned bill of Black-billed Cuckoo is slate-grey to black, with blue-grey along the basal one-third or so of the cutting edges of the upper mandible and with the basal three-quarters or more of the lower mandible blue-grey. Basing identification on bill colour alone, however, is not always advisable. Juvenile Yellow-billed Cuckoo has pale grey on the bill where an adult's bill is yellow. Such juveniles of the western race *occidentalis* possess no yellow at all on the bill, while those of the nominate eastern race show either none or only a limited amount of yellow at the base of the lower mandible. An identification pitfall is provided by individuals that take longer than most to gain the full complement of yellow on the bill. A further problem is created by those adult Black-billed Cuckoos which display a little yellow underneath the lower mandible at its base.

While the eye-rings of first-winters of both species are yellow, those of adult Yellow-billed Cuckoo are grey and the eye-rings and the adjacent bare skin of adult Black-billed Cuckoo are a stunning red, as shown by the individual in



▲ 91. Mystery photograph 214A.



▲ 92. Mystery photograph 214B.

plate 93. Both species possess dark brown irides and blue-grey legs and feet.

The best plumage character for separation is provided by the tail. All of the tail-feathers of adult Yellow-billed Cuckoo, except for the central pair, are black, or largely black, with the second-innermost pair usually tipped with buff-white and the outermost three pairs white-edged and extensively tipped with white. From above, except when the tail is spread, this bold pattern is obscured by the plain central tail-feathers. From below, however, the six large white tips contrast at all times with the otherwise black feathers. First-winter Yellow-billed Cuckoo has a similar, though less distinct, tail-pattern: the outer feathers are dark grey above and grey below, not black, the white edges are more extensive but less well defined, and the white tips are a little smaller and less clean-cut than those of an adult. The tail-feathers of adult Black-billed Cuckoo are uniform in colour except for comparatively small white tips and dark subterminal bars to the outermost four pairs. From above, this rather indistinct pattern is usually hidden by the central tail-feathers, but, from below, the white tips and dark bars contrast somewhat with the otherwise pale grey feathers. First-winter Black-billed Cuckoo has a similar, though even less well-defined tail-pattern: the dark subterminal bars are either faint or absent and the pale tips of the feathers are very small and buffish-white.

Another good distinguishing feature, though one which should be applied with caution, concerns the wings. The largely rufous inner webs of the greater primary coverts and the majority of the primaries and secondaries of adult Yellow-billed Cuckoo create an area of contrast on each wing. The rufous,



◀ 93. Black-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus erythrophthalmus* with begging nestlings, Canada, June 1995 (Kevin Carlson)

which is usually clearly visible on an individual at rest, shows as large, eye-catching wing patches in flight. The wings of first-winter Yellow-billed Cuckoo, which have the greater primary coverts and most primaries almost wholly rufous and a rufous tone to the outer webs of at least the outer secondaries, are even more colourful. Adult Black-billed Cuckoo generally lacks such contrast, though some individuals show a faint rusty tone to the median and greater wing-coverts and to the bases of the inner primaries. Many first-winter Black-billed Cuckoos, however, like the one in mystery photograph B, possess a deep rufous tone to the greater wing-coverts and to the basal two-thirds of the primaries and the outer secondaries, and thus invite confusion with Yellow-billed Cuckoo.

While some first-winter Yellow-billed Cuckoos have narrow, creamy-white or rich buff margins at the tips of the upperwing-coverts, first-winter Black-billed Cuckoos frequently display slim, off-white or pale buff fringes to the tips of not only the upperwing-coverts, but also the inner primaries and the secondaries.

Although the upperparts of the two cuckoos are of a similar colour, those of Yellow-billed Cuckoo are comparatively brown-toned, while those of Black-billed Cuckoo are relatively grey-toned; this is especially so in autumn. Other differences include Yellow-billed Cuckoo's purer grey forehead and lores, adult Yellow-billed Cuckoo's darker brown ear-coverts, which are often bordered below by a slim, black line, and the very thin pale fringes to the upperpart feathers of first-winter Black-billed Cuckoo.

Both cuckoos possess largely white or pale-cream underparts, normally with the sides of the breast and the lower flanks olive-grey. While the chin, throat and upper breast of Yellow-billed Cuckoo are sometimes tinged with pale grey, with the centre of the throat and breast then creamy or buff, those of Black-billed Cuckoo are not infrequently buff-toned. The underwing-coverts and axillaries, vent and undertail-coverts of Yellow-billed Cuckoo are cream-buff; those of Black-billed Cuckoo are generally more richly coloured, varying from cream-buff to deep yellow-buff.

I am most grateful to Ian Dawson for providing references to works which discuss the colour and pattern of the bill of juvenile Yellow-billed Cuckoo.

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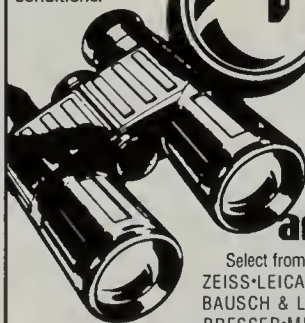
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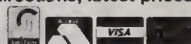
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REVIEWS

Birds on the Spurn Peninsula.

By Ralph Chislett with G. H. Ainsworth. Edited by Michael Densley.

Peregrine Books, Horsforth, 1996. 216 pages; one colour plate; 12 black-and-white plates. ISBN 0-9520268-7-2. £17.95.

As a young teenager, I started birdwatching in the East Riding, and trips to Spurn Point were always a magical occasion. I was lucky to find an original copy of Part One of this title and always wished that it had been completed. Now, at last, the missing half has been added, after more than 30 years, to produce a near-complete and fascinating picture of one of Britain's most exciting bird observatories. This work details the establishment of the observatory and

catalogues the many species seen at Spurn, from early rarities such as the 1896 Houbara Bustard *Chlamydotis undulata* to the 400 Snow Buntings *Plectrophenax nivalis* trapped in January and February 60 years later. It is both an ornithological chronicle and a charming account of pioneering birdwatching and ringing which will truly delight anyone who already knows this unique and wonderful part of the UK.

CHRIS HARBARD

Handbook of the Birds of the World. vol. 4. Sandgrouse to cuckoos.

Edited by Josep del Hoyo, Andrew Elliott & Jordi Sargatal.

Lynx Edicions, Barcelona, 1997. 679 pages; 70 colour plates; 250 colour photographs; 850 distribution maps. ISBN 84-87334-21-0. £110.00.

This series is a reviewer's nightmare. By vol. 3, all the superlatives have already been used. It is even appearing quickly, on a tight schedule, and is solidly bound.

First, however, we should consider the good points. The texts describing family characteristics are not only informative and comprehensive, but are also beautifully written, so that they are a pleasure to read. The species texts are succinct, but remarkably comprehensive and well referenced, and, although they are in tiny type, are made readable by good design and use of clear print which could hardly be bettered. The maps are small, but cover an appropriate portion of the Earth's surface in each case, so that they, too, are ideal for reference.

The paintings (by 18 artists in this volume—half of whom are, notably, Bird Illustrators of the Year) are all good as individual portraits, but also provide splendid comparisons between species (e.g. 16 pigeons on a page); many plates could fairly be described as beautiful, and some are exquisite.

The photographs—yes, there are photographs as well!—portray behaviour as well as plumage, are reproduced exceptionally well and many are simply stunning.

Recently, while judging Bird Photograph of the Year, a typical ornithological question

came up (as we were looking at Dr Jens Eriksen's photograph of a male Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse *Pterocles exustus* rising from a pool): 'Do female sandgrouse ever carry water on their breast feathers to the nestlings in this way?' Turning to the recently received volume, we read:

'How water is brought to the chicks is perhaps the most surprising and most written-about aspect of sandgrouse breeding behaviour. It is curious too that although the truth was discovered at the end of the last century, it was not generally accepted until fairly recently. In 1896, Meade-Waldo published an account in *The Zoologist* [*British Birds*' precursor], that was both lively and accurate, of how a male Pin-tailed Sandgrouse [*P. alchata*] entered a drinking pool, saturated his belly feathers with water and then proceeded to run back to his recently hatched chicks, whereupon they crept beneath him and sucked at his feathers. In several later works, up to 1922, Meade-Waldo continued to insist on the reality of this phenomenon, which had been observed in other species by other bird-fanciers, such as St Quentin who had seen it in the Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse. However, for some strange reason it was repeatedly asserted that the whole story was pure fantasy and that one could only go as

far as saying that sandgrouse might possibly regurgitate like other birds. This state of affairs continued until, in July 1960 near Baghdad, Iraq, S. Marchant happened to observe a male Spotted Sandgrouse [*P. senegallus*] in the wild giving water to his two chicks. The following year, the same author made a similar observation, but this time of a Pin-tailed Sandgrouse, and then a few years later T. J. Cade and G. L. Maclean published a comprehensive study about the Namaqua Sandgrouse [*P. namaqua*], which cleared up the matter once and for all.

'Before taking water into their feathers, the males normally rub their bellies on the ground, presumably to get rid of or reduce the oily film on their feathers, then they enter the water and ruffle their ventral feathers, at the same time rocking to and fro. Sometimes they drink at the same time, though not always. When they reach the chicks they walk with their legs wide apart, instead of placing one foot in front of the other, as they normally do. They then stand in a strange, erect "Watering Posture", which allows the chicks to strip the feathers of water. While the chicks are thus engaged they look rather like a "litter of suckling pigs", as somebody graphically reported. Once they have finished drinking, the males usually rub their bellies on the ground again, perhaps this time in order to get themselves dry.

'The male's belly feathers are specially adapted for carrying water. They are capable of holding up to 15-20 ml of water per gram dry weight, when the equivalent in a synthetic sponge would be little more than 5 ml. The feathers in the proximal sections have barbules without barbicels and are thus not interwoven; they are coiled several times spirally and instead of being arranged at right angles to the barbs, as is the normal arrangement, they are parallel. However, when the keratin is dampened, these barbules uncoil partially and proceed to lie at right angles to the plane of the feather vane or vexillum, so

creating a special layer, a kind of felt, capable of holding water and absorbing it by capillary attraction in which an important part must be played by the hairy filament in which the barbules terminate, some tenths of a millimetre in length. Not all the water manages to reach the chicks, since some of it evaporates during flight, but at least a fair amount does. For the Namaqua Sandgrouse, it has been calculated that males can take in 25-40 ml, and that after a journey lasting 32 km and half an hour they would be able to give their chicks some 10-18 ml. If need be, they make more trips: Pin-tailed and Black-bellied Sandgrouse [*P. orientalis*] in Spain at times make as many as three in a day; it is frequent to see males at the water-holes alone and not at the usual times.

'In the female too, specialized feathers appear, but they cover much less surface area, which tallies with the fact that [the] female is rarely seen to wet these feathers at the watering pools, perhaps only if the male has died, or if, as the chicks grow apace, the male's contributions need to be supplemented. Moreover, these feathers seem to be present in all the species except in the Tibetan Sandgrouse [*Syrhaptes tibetanus*], which is also unique amongst sandgrouse in the special nature of its habitat; it does not visit watering pools on a daily basis.'

I have given this gigantic quote to demonstrate, by one example, just how readable the text is in this book, how interesting its content, and how valuable for reference purposes. The whole volume is a delight to the eye, and a pleasure for anyone who just enjoys good books.

Secondly, there must be some bad points. No book of this size can possibly be error-free. But, even if I had found one, I would not mention it here, for no-one should be deterred from looking at (and, preferably, owning) all the volumes in this series.

J. T. R. SLARROCK

An Annotated Checklist of the Birds of the Oriental Region.

By Tim Inskipp, Nigel Lindsey & William Duckworth.

Oriental Bird Club, Sandy, 1996. 294 pages. ISBN 0-9529545-0-8. Paperback £9.95.

The Oriental Bird Club has grown steadily since its inception in 1984 and has achieved a great deal. The publication of this book must surely stand as a major milestone in the Club's history and one of which it can be rightly proud.

This checklist is clearly and concisely laid out and lists all the species known to occur within the area covered by the Oriental Bird Club. Widely used alternative English names are also given, which, in a part of the World with a bewildering array of names, is

extremely useful. The at-a-glance, succinct taxonomic notes are equally valuable and add to the importance of this book as an essential reference.

This long-awaited volume has been

extremely well produced, and it is clear that a lot of thought and effort have gone into its making. It is, quite simply, one book you cannot do without.

STEVE ROOKE

Pocket Guide to the Birds of Britain and North-West Europe.

By Chris Kightley & Steve Madge. Illustrated by Dave Nurney.

Pica Press, Mountfield, 1998. 320 pages; 296 colour plates. ISBN 1-873403-49-6. Paperback £11.95.

This boldly designed field guide details 385 species occurring in an area best described as 'Northern Europe'. The omission of southern Iberia and the Balearic Islands is curious, given the popularity of birdwatching holidays there, but otherwise this guide compares favourably with the established European field guides. It is well laid out and easy to use, the maps, status and population data are informative, and the text, annotated around the illustrations and as bulleted points, is concise and detailed, but not abstruse. Inevitably, as in all field guides, some of the most complex groups, such as skuas and raptors, receive superficial treatment. That the authors are well

acquainted with the real field appearance of the birds is obvious, and they often capture this in their text. In addition, the title 'Pocket Guide' is not a misnomer: the book is light, durable and ideal for field use.

Dave Nurney's paintings are big, strive to capture a variety of postures and are, on the whole, accurate. Some, such as the grebes and chats, are excellent, but others, for instance certain raptors, young gulls and tubenoses, are rather less convincing.

In essence, this guide comes recommended: it is a pleasure to use and should prove especially useful to new or inexperienced birders.

OSCAR CAMPBELL

Rare Birds in Dorset.

By Stephen Morrison.

Stephen Morrison, Branksome, 1997. 192 pages; 157 graphs; 55 distribution maps. ISBN 0-9530078-0-4. £19.95.

This is an attractive, well-produced book, albeit one which is expensive bearing in mind that it contains no photographs and just a single vignette. It follows the now-familiar format of using histograms and dot-distribution maps to shed light on the subject. Species accounts vary from nearly four sides for some scarce migrants to just a single line for one-off vagrants. There is no mention of rare subspecies of common species not covered in the text—a puzzling omission considering the current interest in

taxonomic matters. Unfortunately, a constant irritation for the reader is the apparent lack of any subediting, making the text very heavy going in places.

By and large, the hard facts of dates, places and numbers are accurately presented, although, in the absence of any attempt critically to re-evaluate most old records, the book is not the 'complete review' that the author suggests.

MARTIN CADE

Atlas Hnízdniho Rozšíření Ptáků v České Republice 1985-1989.

By Karel Šťastný, Vladimír Bejček & Karel Hudec.

Nakladatelství a Vydavatelství H&H, Jinocany, 1996. 457 pages; 199 line-drawings; 388 distribution maps. ISBN 80-86022-18-8. No price given.

This is 'The Atlas of Breeding Birds in the Czech Republic', based on the 628 'squares' (the standard 12 km × 11.1 km map grid), covered by 750 fieldworkers during 1985-89. This is the second such survey, the first

having been part of the Atlas project covering the whole of what was then Czechoslovakia during 1973-77. (In between came 'The Atlas of Wintering Birds in the Czech Republic, 1982-85', reviewed recently; *Brit.*

Birds 90: 106-107.) Although there is only one page of English text (a mere 0.2% of this book), the inclusion in the book of the 1973-77 maps at quarter-size, alongside the 1985-89 maps, and tables giving statistics for both surveys of numbers of squares containing possible, probable, and confirmed breeding records, make this volume enormously valuable and absolutely fascinating 'reading', even for those, such as myself, who cannot read a word of Czech.

These comparative breeding surveys show extraordinary changes in a mere 12 years. Over 20 species have more than doubled the area of their ranges, and three have declined to half or less of their former ranges. Twelve species were found breeding in 1985-89 which were not breeding 12 years earlier, whereas four species breeding then have subsequently been lost.

These changes have significance far outside the Czech Republic itself, for what is happening there doubtless reflects what has happened or will happen in other parts of Europe, so that these Czech data can be used to confirm Europe-wide trends or act as a basis for prediction of range expansion and colonisation or range contraction and extirpation. There is also significance for those who are interested in rarities, for vagrancy is far more likely to occur from a thriving and expanding population than from one that is declining and contracting. It is worth, therefore, listing some of the major changes which have been revealed by these two surveys.

The following species have all at least doubled their ranges in 12 years: Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*, Black Stork *Ciconia nigra*, Mute Swan *Cygnus olor*, Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*, Black Kite *Milvus migrans*, Red Kite *M. milvus*, Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*, Hen Harrier *C. cyaneus*, Montagu's Harrier *C. pygargus*, Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*, Black Tern *Chlidonias niger*, Pygmy Owl *Glaucidium passerinum*, Tengmalm's Owl *Aegolius funereus*, European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*, White-backed Woodpecker *Dendrocopos leucotos*, Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva*, Bearded Tit *Panurus biannicus*, Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus*, Rook *Corvus frugilegus*, Raven *C. corax* and Common

Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*. The two biggest increases were by Red Kite (from 1% to 17% of the squares in the Czech Republic) and Raven (from 3% to an amazing 45%). Other notable increases of especial interest to ornithologists in Britain for a variety of reasons were shown by Honey-buzzard *Peris apivorus*, Eagle Owl *Bubo bubo*, Rufous Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*, Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*, River Warbler *Locustella fluviatilis*, Savi's Warbler *L. luscinoides*, Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*, Firecrest *Regulus ignicapillus*, Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis* and Willow Tit *Parus montanus*.

The 12 species which have colonised since the earlier survey are Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*, Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*, Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*, White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*, Common Crane *Grus grus*, Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus*, Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*, Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*, Common Gull *L. canus*, Ural Owl *Strix uralensis*, Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia* and Bluethroat *L. svecica*. The only three of these showing significant spread were Great Cormorant (5% of 'squares'), Green Sandpiper (6%) and Bluethroat (7%).

The declines have been fewer, only three species declining to half or less of their previous range: Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca* (from 6.5% to 3%), Hoopoe *Upupa epops* (from 30% to 15%) and Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator* (3% to 1%), but other large declines were shown by Black Grouse *Tetrao tetrix*, European Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*, Wood Lark *Lullula arborea* and Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra*. Four species which were breeding in the 1970s had ceased to do so by the 1980s: Pintail *Anas acuta*, Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus*, Rock Thrush *Monticola saxatilis* and Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor*.

These are just the highlights, which should whet the appetite of everyone who is interested in range changes and population trends of Europe's birds. The value and interest of a repeat survey of this sort are more than double those of even a trail-blazing first survey. This splendid volume deserves to be in all serious ornithological libraries.

J. T. R. SHARROCK

ALSO RECEIVED

Where to Watch Birds in Australasia and Oceania. By Nigel Wheatley.

(Christopher Helm Publishers, London, 1998. 448 pages. ISBN 0-7136-4543-1. £16.99)

A Guide to the Nest, Eggs, and Nestlings of North American Birds. By Paul J. Baicich & Colin J. O. Harrison (Academic Press, London, 1997. 2nd edn. 347 pages. ISBN 0-12-072831-1. Paperback \$24.95) This is a fine guide and I certainly would not be without it if I lived in North America. It provides comprehensive coverage of 669 species of birds breeding in Canada and the United States. Each species account covers about one-third of a page and provides a succinct description of nest, eggs, young and parental behaviour. Beautifully illustrated, with line-drawings throughout the text, it also contains excellent colour plates of selected nestlings and of the eggs of 597 species.
HUMPHREY Q. P. CRICK

The Large Gulls of North America. Introduced by Jon L. Dunn. (Bird Images Video Guides, Sherburn-in-Elmet, 1997. The Advanced Birding Video Series. Video 1, covering 13 species, total running time 119 minutes. £16.95) Here is an explosion of gulls! Numerous images of all ages of Thayer's *Larus thayeri*, 'Kumlien's' *L. glaucoides kumlieni*, the North American race of Herring Gull *L. argentatus smithsonianus* and those British 'wannabees', Glaucous-winged *L. glaucescens* and Slaty-backed *L. schistisagus*, plus fascinating sequences of Yellow-footed *L. livens*, colonising Kelp *L. dominicanus*, the *barrovianus* race of Glaucous *L. hyperboreus*, and Vega Gulls *L. argentatus vegae*. It is comprehensive, but not exhaustive (e.g. nothing on variation in wingtip pattern of adult *smithsonianus*), with some misidentifications, incorrect ageings and wrong assumptions. It is also a missed opportunity, with nothing on vocalisations. Nevertheless, if you want a glimpse of these birds' real appearance, and wish to be equipped for pioneering gull action, get this video.
MARTIN GARNER

A Dissimulation of Birds: illustrated collective nouns of birds. By Steve Palin. (Minerva Press, London, 1998. 48 pages. ISBN 0-75410-290-4. Paperback £9.99) Some of the nouns of assemblage for flocks of birds are covered in 22 double-page spreads (the whole of the left-hand page being devoted to paintings of the birds cavorting around a large capital letter of the noun described, with this same illustration repeated and occupying one-third of the right-hand page), each devoted to one such

word (e.g. exaltation of larks). There is also a useful list of over 150 such terms. Some of the supposed derivations could be disputed (e.g. a fall of Woodcocks *Scolopax rusticola* surely derives from the sudden appearance of large numbers, particularly on the East Coast in autumn or in hard-weather movements). The author states that the book is not intended to be academic, but is intended to provide fun. It is described as 'An invaluable addition to any bird-lover's library.' Yes.
JTRS

Field Guide to the Birds of Australia. By Ken Simpson & Nicolas Day. (A & C Black, London, 1998. 5th edn. 400 pages. ISBN 0-7136-4877-5. Paperback £24.99) In this third edition of the paperback version of Simpson & Day's Australian guide, there are 20 new colour plates, the identification section has been reordered to match the most up-to-date classification, the distribution maps have been entirely redrawn and updated, and numerous black-and-white illustrations have been added. This guide now competes directly with the latest version of the Slater guide and the completely revised Pizzey guide, providing three excellent field guides from which to choose when birding in Australia. All three can be recommended and each has different advantages; the strength of this guide is the excellent Handbook section, which is over 100 pages long.
DAVID FISHER

Atlas of Breeding Birds of the Falkland Islands. By Robin W. Woods and Anne Woods. (Anthony Nelson Publishers, Oswestry, 1997. 190 pages. ISBN 0904614-60-3. £25.00) This *Atlas* marks the successful culmination of decades of work and interest in the Falklands' birds. It is a professional, excellently presented work, based largely on amateurs' observations. Given the difficulties of covering such inhospitable and often inaccessible terrain with so few observers, numbers and distribution details are, not surprisingly, inexact. There are now, however, clearly documented, sensibly considered records where previously there had been so few. This publication provides an important baseline for further studies, which should help to focus attention on a wide range of local conservation issues. R. P. D. MUNNS



NEWS AND COMMENT

Compiled by Bob Scott and Wendy Dickson

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

Bird fairs—national and regional

The annual British Birdwatching Fair at Rutland Water is now firmly placed in the August diary and continues to grow in size and, as a result, regularly increases the sums of money raised for conservation. The success of the national fair has spawned a host of regional fairs from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to the Chilterns, the South West and no doubt many more.

The regional fairs give opportunities to those who cannot get to Rutland to experience at least some of the excitement, and there is clearly a place for them in the annual birding calendar. There is, however, limited ability for societies and companies to support all the fairs, and organisers must look to local support rather than a full range of the national organisations. It is worrying, too, when there is a close proximity of date and locality, with apparent competition. This is not helpful.

We hope that all the fairs taking place in the coming months and years will give tangible support to conservation.

In addition to the national British Birdwatching Fair (21st-23rd August 1998) at Rutland Water, we have recently been informed of the Birdwatchers' Fair & Wildlife Photofair 1998 at Middleton Hall, Tamworth (4th-5th July 1998), the Scottish Wildlife & Countryside Fair 1998 (5th-6th September 1998) and the South West Birdwatching Fair at Roadford Reservoir, West Devon (3rd-4th October 1998).

Agreement on Shetland sandeel fishery

A notable management package for the Shetland inshore sandeel fishery has been agreed between the Shetland Fishermen's Association (SFA), RSPB Scotland and Scottish Natural Heritage. The package will be presented to the Scottish Office Agriculture, Environment and Fisheries Department (SOAEFD) and is in line with earlier proposals put forward by SOAEFD.

The proposed three-year management scheme will operate a closed season between 1st June and 31st July to take pressure off seabird species such as Arctic Terns *Sterna paradisaea* at the most crucial time in the breeding cycle. Fishing will, however, take place each side of this closed season. The total allowable catch (TAC) of 7,000 tonnes is a substantial increase on the 3,000 tonnes

TAC operating during 1995-97 and follows an unprecedentedly large recruitment of young sandeels in autumn 1997. The TAC will, however, be reviewed annually, to take account of any marked changes in sandeel recruitment and stocks, in order that it can be set in accordance with the precautionary principle. Landing of sandeels from the Shetland fishery should take place only at the two designated ports of Lerwick and Scalloway.

This is the first time that conservationists and fishermen have reached such a complete consensus on management measures which allow a sustainable industrial fishery, whilst also protecting breeding seabirds, sandeel stocks and other wildlife. It bodes well for the future.

On tour to Ireland

Field excursions are not the most important part of a weekend conference, but Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena*, Common Crane *Grus grus*, Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors*, Long-tailed Duck *Clangula hyemalis*, Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus* and notable flocks of geese, Black-tailed Godwits *Limosa limosa* and Greenshanks *Tringa nebularia* all added spice to the 32nd All-Ireland Conference on Bird Conservation held at Rosslare Harbour, Co. Wexford, during 27th-29th March 1998, on the subject of 'Birds and tourism'.

Tourism, within its broadest definition, is now the World's largest industry and 'green tourism' (also variously called 'eco-tourism', 'soft tourism' and a few other names over the weekend) is the fastest-growing sector. It was unfortunate that there seemed to be a complete lack of tourist agencies or authorities present to hear some of the presentations. Topics addressed included how to get the money spent into the pockets of the local community and how to prevent damage to the very wildlife that the tourist has come to see. Contributions took us within Europe

from the heartland of Ireland, via mid Wales, to Finland, and to each of the other continents. How can National Parks adapt and plan for tourism (Liam Lysaght)? What effect can mass-tourism have on unspoiled countryside (Tony Lowes)? How does tourism pay for the wildlife (Roger Lovegrove)? Some topics to stimulate the minds of all touring birders. Pleasant relief was provided by pioneering fieldwork in Donegal (Ian Wallace) and a record World tour (Bryan Bland).

One message that we can all take on board (from Martin Davics) was that every time any of us fills in one of those immigration forms we should make sure to indicate that we are a wildlife tourist, and also tell everyone we meet that that is what we are doing.

The 1998 conference was organised by BirdWatch Ireland, Rutledge House, 8 Longford Place, Monkstown, Co. Dublin, Ireland. In 1999, the conference is scheduled for early March in Northern Ireland; ask for details from RSPB, Belvoir Park Forest, Belfast, Northern Ireland BT8 4QT.

David Scott (1909-1998)

Everyone who was in any way connected with the breeding bird atlas survey in Ireland during 1968-72 will be enormously saddened to hear of the death on 21st April of David Scott. During those years, and for the period up to publication of *The Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland* in 1976, David was the linchpin of the magnificent Irish effort which saw every single 10-km square covered: an achievement beyond the wildest dreams of those who had predicted 25% coverage of Scotland and when, to quote James Ferguson-Lees, 'nearly everyone thought that the coverage would be so thin in Ireland that nothing should be attempted in that country.' David persuaded, cajoled, encouraged and blackmailed almost every Irish birdwatcher to participate, and then led by example, travelling by caravan to the remotest areas and covering them energetically and meticulously. An accountant by profession, his ordered brain ensured that the volumes of paperwork involved in his task as Atlas Co-ordinator for the Republic of Ireland were equally meticulous. His enthusiasm and achievements were the inspiration for others, while his tenacity and dedication ensured that any colleagues who were inclined to be tardy seldom got

away with it. He did not suffer fools gladly, and, as a result, made an enemy of almost everyone at one time or another. Time always healed the wounds, of course, but also, usually, showed that he had been right.

His contribution to Irish ornithology was largely forgotten in the decades following that first *Atlas*, but was immense. The unexpectedly thorough coverage of Ireland meant that, despite having many fewer observers, Ireland was not 'the poor relation', but an equal partner with Britain in this joint enterprise between the fledgling Irish Wildbird Conservancy (now IWC BirdWatch Ireland) and the British Trust for Ornithology. Today's Irish ornithologists and conservationists owe him a great debt of gratitude. What I shall remember most, however, is the twinkle in his eye and the impish grin on his face as he shared his joy in his studies of Hen Harriers *Circus cyaneus* and when he made discoveries such as populations of Whinchats *Saxicola rubetra* in Co. Sligo and Ring Ouzels *Turdus torquatus* in Co. Leitrim.

A profile of David Scott, by Dr John Temple Lang, was featured in our series 'Personalities' in 1977 (*Brit. Birds* 70: 71-72).

(JTRS)

Calf of Man and Filey first

First of the 1997 annual reports to reach us were those for the Calf of Man and Filey Brigg, both in early April.

The Calf of Man Bird Observatory was founded back in 1959, so new species are hard to come by. Three were claimed in 1997: a Bulwer's Petrel *Bulweria bulwerii* on 13th September is said to be 'Subject to acceptance by BBRC' (but had still not been submitted by mid May 1998), while an Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola* on 7th May (a major rarity in spring) and a Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus* on 3rd September are both described in terms that suggest that that is quite probably what they were. Including these three claims, 171 bird species were recorded during the year, the highest-ever total. The year-list of 124 'macro' moths included 11 new to the island.

The Calf of Man Bird Observatory Annual Report for 1997, compiled by Tim Bagworth, is available, price £2.50 (+ p&p), from H. Magee, The Manx Museum, Douglas, Isle of Man IM1 3LY.

Filey Brigg recorded 'only' 210 bird species in the year and no major rarity, but the *Report* reflects the dedication of the area's observers and the fascination of studying a 'patch' on observatory lines. Two problem birds are discussed: a gull, probably a leucistic Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*, and a treecreeper, probably the Scandinavian, nominate race of Eurasian Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris*.

As well as the birds, the *Filey Brigg Bird Report 1997*, edited by Peter J. Dunn, documents 14 species of dragonfly, 20 butterflies and 89 moths. It is available, price £3 (+ 80p p&p), from John Harwood, 13 West Garth Gardens, Cayton, Scarborough YO11 3SF.

Suffolk late but lavish

With a bumper 200 pages, *Suffolk Birds* (vol. 46), incorporating the 1996 Suffolk Bird Report, arrived with us in early April. Too late for inclusion in the Best Annual Bird Report Awards judging (though note that the rules have been amended and it will be eligible in the next assessments), but quite up to snuff. Rarities described in detail include the county's first Crested Lark *Galerida cristata* (Paul Holmes) and Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata* (Dave Jupp), second Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola* (Brian Small), Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis* (John Archer) and Western Bonelli's Warbler *P. bonelli* (Mark Grantham) and third Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica* (Ricky Fairhead).

This model report, edited by Mike Crewe, costs £7.50 (+ £1.50 p&p) from the Suffolk Naturalists' Society, The Museum, High Street, Ipswich IP1 3QH.

Garden mammals

The Mammal Society and the People's Trust for Endangered Species are launching a survey of mammals in gardens, starting in August 1998. If you would like to participate, ask for a questionnaire from James Hargreave, 15 Cloisters House, 8 Battersea Park Road, London SW8 4BG; phone 0171 622 2232; fax 0171 498 4459; e-mail Mammal_Survey@compuserve.com

Cormorants and fish again

A recent report by the Environment Agency shows that the impact of Great Cormorants *Phalacrocorax carbo* on fish populations is perhaps not so great as popularly perceived on all waters. This follows a 12-month research project which studied the cormorants' feeding habits at two lakes in Hertfordshire's Lea Valley. To give a balanced view, Wildlife Trust and RSPB representatives were called on to carry out observations to identify the number of fish being taken. The report—*An Assessment of Cormorant Depredation on Stillwater Fish Populations in the Lea and Colne Valleys of the Thames Catchment*—revealed a 6% loss of existing fish in summer and a 17% loss in winter.

A detailed survey among several hundred angling clubs revealed that the birds seemed to prefer Roach *Rutilus rutilus*, small Bream *Abramis brama* and Rudd *Scardinius erythrophthalmus* in the 10-20cm length range. Unfortunately, many anglers are fighting back by restocking lakes with large Carp *Cyprinus auratus* which, although too big for the birds, are having a detrimental effect: being aggressive, stirring up lake floors and making underwater conditions too difficult for plant life (and subsequently other fish) to survive. Thus, anglers may be exacerbating the situation and ultimately could destroy more fish than do cormorants.

Rarity descriptions now, please

It is very helpful if all observers of rarities send in their descriptions (preferably to the relevant county or regional recorder) as soon as possible after the sighting. It will speed up the decision-making process if notes on all major spring rarities are submitted by mid July at the latest. Please do not wait until the end of the year. Thank you. (*Contributed by M. J. Rogers*)

'Birds of Wiltshire' project

The Wiltshire Ornithological Society began a four-year summer survey of the county's birds by tetrads in 1995. Its aims have been (a) to find as many species as possible in each tetrad during April-July, also trying to establish which are breeding, and (b) to make two two-hour counts of all individual adults of every species seen in each tetrad, on routes planned in advance to cover all the main habitat types, the first in April-May and the second in June-July. Over 100 WOS members have been taking part, and 83% of the 913 tetrads were covered in the first three years. The WOS is now to begin a two-year winter survey based on randomly selected tetrads in each 10-km square.

The results will be published in a new *Birds of Wiltshire* which will have tetrad maps for breeding, distribution and relative density, and 10-km winter distribution maps for residents and winter visitors. The accompanying texts will interpret the maps against national and regional trends. Passage migrants and vagrants will be summarised.

RSPB Events Diary

More than half the year is already over, but it is worth remembering that each spring the RSPB publishes its *Diary of Events* running from the beginning of April to the end of September throughout the UK.

A great variety is on offer: educational fun activities during school holidays, walks at many reserves, advice on optical equipment, floral forays and even a moth morning. A nominal charge is made at many events, slightly more for non-members of the Society. For further information, contact the RSPB's Media Unit on 01767 680551.

Under 22? Keep a notebook? Let's see it!

If you are (or you know) a birdwatcher aged 21 or under, and thereby eligible to win the title Young Ornithologist of the Year, please enter (or encourage him or her to enter) the competition. Prizes and titles will be awarded within three age categories: 18-21 years, 15-17 years and 14 or under.

The prizes for the winners are worth over £2,500, and all it takes to enter is a good field notebook. For 1998, entrants should submit their actual field notebooks relating to all or part of the period 16th August 1997 to 15th August 1998, plus any notes written up afterwards, by the closing date of 1st September 1998. Entrants must be aged under 22 on 1st September 1998 and should supply details of their date of birth and also a suitable SAE for the return of their notebooks.

'Birding Scotland'

Edited by Ian M. Phillips and designed by Harry I. Scott, *Birding Scotland* is a new journal. The first issue contains papers on 'Birding in North-West Scotland', the September 1997 Unst Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum*, the four Shetland Pallas's Grasshopper Warblers *Locustella certhiola* in autumn 1997, a nineteenth-century Unst Baltimore Oriole *Icterus galbula*, Icterine Warblers *Hippolais icterina* on the Scottish east coast, Mediterranean Gulls *Larus melanocephalus*, a Fife Bonaparte's Gull *L. philadelphia*, 'Kinnaird Head, a Mecca for gulls', Scottish birding highlights in 1997, mainland Scotland's first Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis*, North American Herring Gull *Larus argentatus smithsonianus* 100 nautical miles off St Kilda, Two-barred Crossbill *Loxia leucoptera* on the Isle of May, and, in association with the Scottish Ornithologists' Club, 'The Scottish List'. All this within a 48-page issue!

We trust that all Scottish birdwatchers will continue to support and be active members of the long-established Scottish Ornithologists' Club (21 Regent Terrace, Edinburgh EH7 5BT), but at the same time there will probably be many who wish to sample the migrants and rare-birds fare of *Birding Scotland*. The subscription is £15.00 p.a. for four issues, from H. Scott, c/o Pica Design, 259 Union Grove, Aberdeen AB10 6SX.

Boost for Broads wetlands

A £750,000 project by the Broads Authority, known as New Wetland Harvests, supported by local and national partners with a grant of £345,000 from Europe, involves a prototype high-tech Wetland Harvester machine which will help to develop environmentally sustainable technology for wetland management.

Harvesting fens is a labour-intensive process, involving teams of volunteers 'scrub-bashing' and then burning the litter. This project seeks to find uses for these fen 'products' as biofuel and animal feed, so that the fens have a viable economic and ecological future.

New EBCC Chairman

Dr David Gibbons, Head of Monitoring at the RSPB, was elected Chairman of the European Bird Census Council at its March 1998 meeting in Cottbus, Germany. After working on the joint publication of the British Trust for Ornithology, the Scottish Ornithologists' Club and the Irish Wildbird Conservancy (now BirdWatch Ireland), *The New Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland 1988-1991*, David moved to the RSPB. He currently co-ordinates the Society's input to UK bird-monitoring and works with BirdLife International partners in Spain and Hungary to get bird-monitoring schemes established elsewhere in Europe. He also recently visited the Caribbean island of Montserrat to determine the population levels of the Montserrat Oriole *Icterus oberi* following the volcanic eruptions.

New BOURC Chairman

After completing his four-year term, Prof. David Parkin's position as Chairman of the British Ornithologists' Union's Records Committee has been taken on by B. A. E. (Tony) Marr. We wish him good luck in his role, which will involve keeping an even hand between the avid splitters and the conservative lumpers, and persuading stick-in-the-mud Brits that the one cisticola with a range extending into Europe should have the same English name here as it does in the rest of the World.

We look forward to working with Tony and building on the excellent co-operation which has long existed between BB and the BOU and between the BBRC and the BOURC.

Belize BirdFest

A week of tours and expeditions is being run during 2nd-8th October 1998 by the non-profit organisation, the Belize Audubon Society, to raise funds for conservation. For details, contact the BAS at 12 Fort Street, PO Box 1001, Belize City, Belize; phone 501-2-35004; fax 501-2-34985; E-mail base@Btl.net; Website <http://www.belizeaudubon.org>

Mushrooms being overexploited

Over-picking of wild mushrooms and other fungi is becoming a problem, according to English Nature, so a group of conservation organisations has now decided to establish a code of practice.

'Fungus forays' are enjoyable events that help people to learn about the natural environment, but collecting wild fungi is becoming a serious problem for rangers and wardens of land with public access. More research is needed into the effects of recreational and commercial collecting on woodland wildlife. The group feels, however, that there is a need to set aside certain areas, such as Nature Reserves containing rare species, where *no* picking should take place other than for research purposes.

In line with continental European practice, the Code will recommend a maximum weight of edible mushrooms which can be taken per day, together with a recommended limit on the number of specimens taken for identification purposes. Separate advice will be produced for leaders of fungus forays.

For further information, contact Dr Brian Johnson on 01823 283211.

Phone the Jersey owls

Phonecards are becoming as collectable as postage stamps, and telecommunications companies have not been slow in realising this. We have just received from *Jersey Telecoms* its latest set of phonecards produced in conjunction with the local branch of The Hawk & Owl Trust. The extremely attractive cards feature Barn Owl *Tyto alba*, Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*, Long-eared Owl *A. otus* and a family party of young Barn Owls. The cards are available at £2 each; a presentation set with information on the owls is also available. Details from Jersey Telecoms, PO Box 53, Telephone House, Jersey JE4 8PB, Channel Islands.

Twitchers?

We have all experienced it. Like it or not, we have been called 'twitchers'. In the eyes of the media, the word is synonymous with 'birdwatcher'. You calmly explain, you argue strongly, but still it happens. Occasionally, it happens where it should not. We have just received the latest advertising brochure from Benham stamps, a company that specialises in supplying first-day covers. They are promoting a new scheme of 'RSPB bird club first day covers', 25% of the money to be raised being passed to the RSPB. Good stuff, but the promotional photograph, featuring Bill Oddie, Barbara Young and Julian Pettifer, labels them as 'Britain's best known Twitchers'. Oh dear!

If you are interested in the first-day covers, contact Benhams, Benham House, Folkestone, Kent CT20 1SD.

Fastest-growing bird club in Scotland

Such is the claim of the *Fife Bird Club* in a recent Press release. It states that, over the past 13 years, the Club has developed and grown in size well beyond expectations. Founded by a group of 12 in 1985, the Club now boasts over 300 members. To know more, contact the FBC, 25 St Fillans Road, Kirkcaldy, Fife KY2 6LT.

Safer environment for Grey Herons

English Nature has successfully persuaded Eastern Electricity to place underground the power lines supplying Osea Island, Essex. This will particularly benefit the 16 or so pairs of Grey Herons *Ardea cinerea* that breed in the area. In one recent year, six were killed by flying into the overhead power lines.

New RSPB Chief Executive

Following Barbara Young's departure to head English Nature (*Brit. Birds* 91: 260), Graham Wynne has been appointed as

supremo of the RSPB. We wish him well in this vital and challenging post.



MONTHLY MARATHON

This month's 'Marathon' text and photograph are on page 272.

RULES

1. Only current individual subscribers to *British Birds* are eligible to take part. Entrants should give their name, address and *BB* reference number on their entry. Only one entry is permitted per person each month.
2. Entries must be sent by post, each one on a separate postcard, and be received at the *British Birds* Editorial Office (Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ) by the stated closing date. Every care will be taken, but, even if negligence is involved, no responsibility can be accepted for non-delivery, non-receipt or accidental loss of entries.
3. All *BB* subscribers are eligible, except members of the Editorial Board and staff of *British Birds*, Directors and members of staff of *SUNBIRD/WINGS* Holidays, and Directors and members of staff of our printers, Newnorth Print Ltd. (Members of *BB* Notes Panels, the Rarities Committee, and other voluntary contributors—including bird-photographers, even if one of their photographs is used in the competition—are eligible unless proscribed above.)
4. To win, a *British Birds* subscriber must correctly identify the species shown in ten consecutive photographs included in this competition. The 'Monthly marathon' will continue until the prize has been won.
5. In the event of two or more *BB* subscribers achieving the ten-in-a-row simultaneously, the competition will continue each month until one of them (or someone else!) achieves a longer run of correct entries than any other contestant.
6. In the event of any dispute, including controversy over the identity of any of the birds in the photographs, the decision of the Managing Editor of *British Birds* is final and binding on all parties.
7. No correspondence can be entered into concerning this competition.
8. The name and address of the winner will be announced in *British Birds*.





RECENT BBRC DECISIONS



This monthly listing of the most-recent decisions by the British Birds Rarities Committee is not intended to be comprehensive or in any way to replace the annual 'Report on rare birds in Great Britain'. The records listed are mostly those of the rarest species, or those of special interest for other reasons. All records refer to 1997 unless stated otherwise.

ACCEPTED: **Bufflehead** *Bucephala albeola* Heveningham Hall Lake (Suffolk), 29th November to 6th December. **Solitary Sandpiper** *Tringa solitaria* Castel, Guernsey (Channel Islands), 25th-28th August. **Thrush Nightingale** *Luscinia luscinia* Landguard (Suffolk), 28th September. **Pied Wheatear** *Oenanthe pleschanka* Seahouses (Northumberland), 29th October. **White's Thrush** *Zoothera dauma* Foula (Shetland), 29th September. **Booted Warbler** *Hippolais caligata* Icklesham (East Sussex), 30th September 1996. **Radde's Warbler** *Phylloscopus schwarzi* St Levan (Cornwall), 19th October. **Dusky Warbler** *P. fuscatus* Corton (Suffolk), 23rd-24th October. **Penduline Tit** *Remiz pendulinus* Four, Hickling (Norfolk), 20th December. **Lesser Grey Shrike** *Lanins minor* Foula, 28th May; Sidlesham (West Sussex), 24th October. **Rosy Starling** *Sturnus roseus* Newbiggin-by-the-Sea (Northumberland), 1st September.

M. J. Rogers, Secretary, BBRC, 2 Churchtown Cottages, Towednack, St Ives, Cornwall TR26 3AZ



RECENT REPORTS

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary covers the period from 11th May to 14th June 1998.
These are unchecked reports, not authenticated records.

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea* Two, Ballycotton (Co. Cork), 12th May. **Lesser Scaup** *Aythya affinis* Cottam (Nottinghamshire), 4th-17th May. **White-rumped Sandpiper** *Calidris fuscicollis* Dawlish Warren (Devon), 28th-30th May. **Franklin's Gull** *Larus pipixcan* Nutt's Corner (Co. Antrim), 5th June, potential first for Northern Ireland. **Scops Owl** *Otus scops* found injured, Port Glasgow (Strathclyde), 20th May, taken into care, released 12th June. **Pallid Swift** *Apus pallidus* St Agnes (Scilly), 17th May; Cliffe (Kent), 25th May. **Black-eared Wheatear** *Oenanthe hispanica* Winspit

(Dorset), 16th May; Tresco (Scilly), 18th-23rd May; Skomer (Pembrokeshire), 4th June. **River Warbler** *Locustella fluviatilis* Gibraltar Point (Lincolnshire), 29th May. **Collared Flycatcher** *Ficedula albicollis* Fair Isle (Shetland), 28th May. **Two-barred Crossbill** *Loxia leucoptera* Sandringham (Norfolk), 23rd-24th May. **White-throated Sparrow** *Zonotrichia albicollis* Noss (Shetland), 8th June. **Cretzschmar's Bunting** *Emberiza caesia* Stronsay (Orkney), 14th-18th May. **Chestnut Bunting** *E. rutila* Male, Salhouse (Norfolk), 30th May to 1st June.



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21 - 30 Jan 99; 11 - 20 Feb 99; 25 Feb - 6 Mar 99.

MALAWI - Lake Malawi, Zomba Plateau &
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16 - 25 Mar 98; 15 - 24 Feb 99; 15 - 24 Mar 99.

SOUTHERN MOROCCO - The desert,
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ETHIOPIA - Addis, Gafersa, Awash National Park,
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12 - 21 Feb 99; 9 - 18 Apr 99.

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APOLOGY The photographs of Ian Carter and Dr Martin Collinson were
accidentally transposed on page 209 in the last month's issue. A revised four-page
section (209-210, 259-260) is included in the centre of this issue for readers to
substitute in their June issues.



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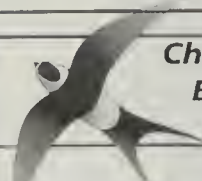
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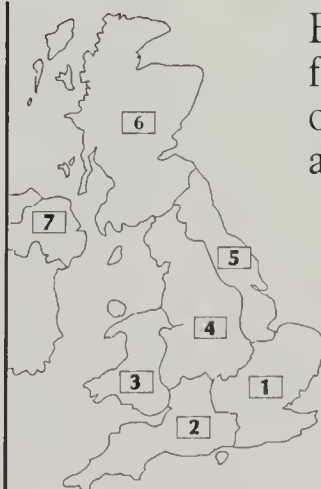
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- Front cover:** Great Ringed Plovers *Charadrius hiaticula* displaying, Newton-by-the-Sea, Northumberland, December 1997 (*Paul Henery*): the original of this month's cover design, measuring 17.0 × 16.96 cm, is for sale in a postal auction (see page 66 for procedure).



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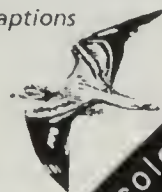
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Predictions of the effects of global climate change on Britain's birds

Stephen Moss

ABSTRACT Global climate change is no longer speculation, but reality. It will have unprecedented effects on Britain's weather and climate, and on habitats, ecosystems and the flora and fauna which comprise them, including birds.

As a result, during the next century there are likely to be major changes in our avifauna: range extensions and contractions, rises and declines in populations, new colonists and extinctions as British breeding birds. Global warming will also affect patterns of migration, wintering and vagrancy, with long-distance migrants particularly at risk.

In order to deal with the new challenges posed by climate change, our current conservation strategy will have to shift rapidly and radically. Whole ecosystems may have to be relocated or in some cases created from scratch, in order to deal with loss of habitat and changes in range. Whether or not this will ultimately prove successful it is still too early to say.

Global climate change, as a result of mankind's profligate misuse of natural resources, is no longer mere speculation, but an objective, proven reality. In the carefully chosen words of the 1995 report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC 1996):

'The balance of evidence now suggests that there is a discernible human influence on global climate.'

The evidence for this is as follows:

- Since the late nineteenth century, global surface temperatures have increased by 0.3°-0.6°C.
- Nine out of ten of the hottest years on record, globally, have occurred since 1983. The top five have occurred since 1990.
- The year 1997 was the warmest, globally, since records began in the late nineteenth century.
- In England, the five warmest years since records began in 1659 have all been since 1975.

This global rise in temperatures has been caused by the rapid increase in atmospheric concentration of the 'greenhouse gases', mainly carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄) and nitrous oxide (N₂O). These are released as a result of the burning of fossil fuels, and form a layer around the Earth's atmosphere. As the Sun's heat is reflected away from the Earth's surface, the gases prevent the heat escaping, leading to a rise in temperatures.

Global warming—the future

The IPCC has also forecast the likely progress of global climate change (IPCC 1996):

- Over the next century, global average temperatures are predicted to rise by 1.5°-4°C, although as a result of the cooling effects of pollution this may reduce to 1°-3.5°C (all figures from 1990 baseline).
- In the shorter term, by the year 2050, global average temperatures are predicted to rise by 0.5°-2°C.
- In Britain, warming is predicted to continue at a rate of about 0.2°-0.3°C per decade—up to 1.6°C by the year 2050 (CCIRG 1996).

If these predictions are correct, global warming will have an almost incalculable effect on the distribution, population and variety of birdlife, both globally and in Britain.

Global warming in a historical context

The World's climate is far from static. Major fluctuations have occurred in the past, as a result of which birds have had to adapt, often quite rapidly, to periods of climatic amelioration and deterioration. For example, about 3,000 years ago, during a spell of warming, Dalmatian Pelicans *Pelecanus crispus* thrived in the Somerset Levels (Burton 1995).

More recently, a period of warming during the first half of the twentieth century enabled species such as Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*, Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*, Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*, European Serin *Serinus serinus* and Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis* to spread northwards across

Europe, and in the case of the first three, to colonise Britain (Burton 1995; Moss 1995).

In contrast, a brief spell of cooling during the 1960s and early 1970s allowed Scandinavian species, including Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*, Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola* and Snowy Owl *Nyctea scandiaca*, to colonise northeast Scotland, at least temporarily (Burton 1995). A longer-term trend towards wetter, cloudier summers was also implicated in the decline and eventual extinction of the Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* as a British breeding bird (Peakall 1962).

Using previous research by Alexander & Lack (1944), Parslow (1973) and others, Sharrock (1974a) showed that more species were breeding in Britain then than at any time since 1800, with a net gain of about five species per decade since 1949. So, even within our lifetimes, we have seen climate change affect the distribution of our breeding birds. There are, however, important differences from the current situation. Past climate change was fairly local, short-lived and gradual. For example, since the height of the last Ice Age, more than 15,000 years ago, global average temperatures have increased by only 5°–7°C, an average of 1°C every 2,000–3,000 years.

Today's climate change is very different. It is global, long-lasting and happening faster than at any time in recorded history—as much as one hundred times the rate of 'natural' climate change. This is likely to have dramatic consequences for habitats and ecosystems, and for the birds that depend on them.

Even more worryingly, there is a growing body of evidence that global climate change is already having far-reaching effects on the World's ecosystems, involving species from taxa as diverse as amphibia, insects and flowering plants, and affecting ecosystems on every continent (Briggs 1997).

Likely effects of global warming on Britain's weather and climate

It is important to understand that the effects of climate change will not be spread evenly across the Earth's surface. Some areas will get much warmer than others, while a few places may even experience lower temperatures than before.

Here in Britain, the Climate Change Impacts Review Group suggests that the following changes are likely to occur during the next century (CCIRG 1996):

- Temperatures to rise, probably by more than the global average because of our relative proximity to the North Pole.
- Milder, less-frosty winters.
- A greater frequency of warm summers, with twice as many 'heat-wave days'.
- A general increase in rainfall of about 10%, most of which will fall in northern and western Britain.
- Winter rainfall to increase in southeast England, but summers to become much drier, with droughts and a rise in evaporation rates leading to near-desert conditions in some areas.
- A higher incidence of 'extreme weather events', such as storms.

- Average wind speeds to increase, especially around the spring and autumn equinoxes.

These predictions are based on the most likely consequences of global warming, and are therefore subject to a margin of error. For example, some scientists believe that warmer summers will result in more cloud-cover, and therefore higher summer rainfall. Others suggest that a weakening of the prevailing Atlantic weather patterns could result in a more continental-type climate, especially in southeast England.

Recently, a far more catastrophic scenario has emerged: the 'Big Freeze', in which changes in ocean currents would lead to a weakening of the North Atlantic Drift, the current which gives northwest Europe its relatively mild winter climate. Should the North Atlantic Drift change course, Britain and Ireland could experience the kinds of winter temperatures to be expected at our northerly latitude—as low as minus 50°C (Pearce & Smith 1993).

This is a possible, but unlikely, consequence of global warming, and for the purposes of this paper I propose to ignore it. The fact that it can be considered seriously shows, however, how unpredictable the consequences of global warming may be.

Long-term effects of global warming on habitats and ecosystems

The popular press tends to regard global warming as—to borrow the comment by Sellar & Yeatman (1930) on the Roman Conquest—'a *Good Thing*', leading to Mediterranean conditions at South Coast holiday resorts, and bringing an end to winter freeze-ups.

Birdwatchers and ornithologists may be tempted to agree, anticipating colonists from the south, such as Hoopoe *Upupa epops*, Black Kite *Milvus migrans* and Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*.

This is, however, a dangerous oversimplification. Global warming will set in motion a complex and unpredictable train of events which will affect all ecosystems, and the fauna and flora that comprise them. By upsetting the current balance (albeit a 'balance' already altered by Man's activities), no organism will be left untouched by its influence.

Global warming is likely to have the following effects on habitats and ecosystems:

- Changing the start and end dates, and length, of the growing season, and consequently altering the balance of plant life in any particular habitat (Huntley 1995).
- Allowing plants to extend their ranges northward in latitude or higher in altitude, where they will compete with existing flora, to the detriment of habitats such as the specialised arctic-alpine ecosystem of the Scottish Highlands.
- Causing the gradual disappearance of the dominant plant species, and its replacement with one more tolerant of the new conditions, such as Beech *Fagus sylvatica* replacing oak *Quercus*, scrub and carr replacing reedbeds, and Heather *Calluna vulgaris* replacing heath *Erica* (Briggs & Hossell 1995).
- Allowing insects (both benevolent and 'pests') to extend their ranges, and,

by reducing winter mortality rates, to increase their populations.

- Affecting the balance between predators and their prey, and between different species competing for similar resources, by favouring one species over another.
- Increasing the geographical range, virulence and effect of diseases.
- Allowing farmers to grow new crops, such as Sunflower *Helianthus annuus* and Maize *Zea mays*.
- Disrupting the long-established relationships between species, by changing the timing of specific events in their life-cycles (Briggs 1997).

Changes in sea-level as a result of global warming

As well as changes in temperature and rainfall, global warming is predicted to lead to rises in sea-level. Popular wisdom believes that this will be a result of the melting of the polar ice caps, but in fact this will not have a major effect for many years to come. The main effect will be because water expands in volume as it warms up.

Already, since the end of the nineteenth century, sea-levels have risen by 10–25 cm. Current predictions suggest that, by the year 2050, sea-levels will have risen by a further 37 cm; and, by 2100, by 65 cm (IPCC 1996; CCIRG 1996).

Rises such as these would result in temporary or permanent flooding of many low-lying coastal areas, such as The Wash, the North Norfolk coast and the Solway Firth. Some 10,000 ha of mudflats and 2,750 ha of salt-marsh in the UK are threatened with permanent flooding. This would have untold consequences for the millions of waders and wildfowl which depend on these ecosystems.

Other consequences of rises in sea-level could include:

- Unpredictable effects on tidal ecosystems, potentially reducing food supplies.
- Loss of coastal habitat, affecting shoreline nesters such as Little Tern *Sterna albifrons* and Great Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*.
- Salination of coastal freshwater ecosystems, such as reedbeds, threatening rare breeders such as Great Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*.
- Changes in marine ecosystems, reducing the food supplies for seabirds such as Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea* and Puffin *Fratercula arctica*.
- An increase in outbreaks of botulism.
- An increase in the spread of algal blooms, which kill fish by depriving them of oxygen.

The Climate Change Impacts Review Group predicts that these changes will 'greatly reduce the numbers of many species of birds that roost, feed or breed on the UK coasts' (CCIRG 1996).

Likely consequences of global climate change for Britain's birdlife

It is important to stress that global climate change, and its effects on birdlife, are not taking place in isolation. Even without the added pressures brought about by global warming, birds face a bleak future, with habitat loss, pollution and persecution amongst the greatest threats to their continued survival.

Latest predictions from BirdLife International suggest that as many as 10% of the World's bird species may be endangered, and the rate of extinction is likely to increase dramatically in the coming century. So, global warming will have a far greater impact than if bird populations were thriving.

Effects of global warming on birds

These are some of the likely effects of global warming on birds:

- Changes in temperatures and rainfall during spring and summer are already allowing many species to begin breeding earlier, lay larger clutches and raise more young (see below).
- Changes in temperature and rainfall during autumn and winter will affect survival rates of resident species, such as Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes* and Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*.
- Changes in the plant life of a particular ecosystem may have beneficial or harmful effects on the birds that nest or roost there.
- Changes in invertebrate life of a particular ecosystem may have beneficial or harmful effects on birds that prey on these species.
- Rises in average summer temperatures will result in expansions and contractions of breeding range.
- Rises in average winter temperatures will affect wintering ranges, for example allowing wildfowl to winter farther north and east than at present.
- Rises in sea-level will affect migrant waders, which depend on tidal ecosystems for food.
- Changes in wind-patterns will affect vagrancy.

Winners and losers in Britain

The birdlife of Britain is likely to be particularly affected as a result of global warming, partly because of our maritime climate, which gives us a very low range of temperatures between summer and winter compared with other parts of the World. This means that even a slight alteration in temperatures could have a disproportionate effect. Indeed, we are already seeing indications that climate change is altering the habits of our breeding and wintering birds.

Studies by the BTO have shown that 20 common breeding birds are nesting significantly earlier now than they were 25 years ago, with laying dates on average nine days earlier (Crick *et al.* 1997). The species involved include water-birds, such as Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*; resident insectivores, such as Wren; migrant insectivores, including five species of warbler; crows, such as Magpie *Pica pica*; and seed-eaters, such as Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*. Perhaps more significantly, they cover a wide range of laying dates, from early to late in the season, suggesting that global warming, rather than more short-term factors, such as a particular season's weather, is the cause. These findings have been partially confirmed by long-term studies of Great Tit *Parus major* in Wytham Wood, Oxfordshire (McCleery & Perrins 1998).

Over the same period, a higher frequency of mild winters has led to an increase in wintering by summer visitors such as Common Chiffchaff

Phylloscopus collybita and Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*. Wintering Blackcaps originate from central Europe, where it has been discovered that they have a higher breeding success than those wintering in traditional areas such as the Mediterranean.

Both these changes would seem to be good news for the birds concerned, and, indeed, Prof. Dr Peter Berthold has described the first few decades of global warming as likely to produce 'heavenly conditions' for many of Europe's commoner breeding species (Berthold 1993).

But, as global warming accelerates, and conditions become more extreme, problems will begin to occur. Already, changes in the timing and length of the growing season mean that the caterpillar prey of young Great Tits is not available throughout the whole fledging period, leading to potential food shortages (Dr H. P. Q. Crick *in litt.*).

So, in the great climate-change lottery, it is probable that some species will survive and flourish, while others will decline and disappear. Species likely to prosper include those:

- with large populations: e.g. with more than one million breeding pairs in Britain and Ireland (including Common Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*, Wood Pigeon *Columba palumbus*, Sky Lark *Alauda arvensis*, Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis*, Wren, Hedge Accentor *Prunella modularis*, Robin *Erithacus rubecula*, Blackbird *Turdus merula*, Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*, Blue Tit *Parus caeruleus*, Great Tit, Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*, House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* and Chaffinch);
- able to adapt rapidly to change, such as Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus* and Carrion Crow *Corvus corone*;
- able to breed across a large range of temperatures, such as Wood Pigeon, whose range extends from the 13°C to the 30°C isotherm (Voous 1960);
- able to live alongside Man, such as pigeons, gulls and crows;
- for which Britain and Ireland is on the northern edge of their range, such as Firecrest *Regulus ignicapillus* and Golden Oriole;
- without obvious competitors: notably alien, introduced species such as the Rose-ringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri* and Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiacus*.

Species likely to suffer include those:

- with rapidly declining populations as a result of changes in land-use, such as Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra* or Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*;
- with limited or specialised habitats, such as Great Bittern;
- with a highly restricted breeding range, such as Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis* and Ptarmigan *Lagopus mutus*;
- for which Britain and Ireland is on the southern edge of their range, such as Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus* and Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*.

To sum up, in the words of one botanist: 'In the main, rare species with finicky habitat preferences will decline, while common species, which are often abundant and widespread because of their undemanding nature, will increase' (Gates 1992).

Breeding species

At first, global warming would seem to be good news for resident breeding species. The longer growing season, resulting in a greater availability of food, coupled with more-frequent mild winters, allowing higher juvenile survival, should benefit small insectivorous species such as Wren and Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus*.

Not all changes will, however, be beneficial, as 'birds may be adversely affected if they become unsynchronised with the phenology of their food supplies' (Crick *et al.* 1997).

Global warming may also be good news, at least in the short term, for several species for which Britain and Ireland is on the northern edge of their range, such as Firecrest, Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirlus*, Cetti's Warbler and Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata*. Currently, their ranges are limited by both summer and winter temperatures, which control the availability of their food supply and breeding habitat. If, however, the isotherms were to 'shift' northwards by a predicted 150-230 km for every 1°C of warming (Barkham 1994), they may be able to take advantage of suitable habitat to the north of their current ranges.

This may, however, be offset by other consequences of global warming. For example, in the case of Dartford Warbler, the longer growing season will also allow invading plant species to colonise its heathland habitat, which, if left unchecked, will rapidly turn into scrub of birch *Betula* and pine *Pinus*. Also, more prolonged and severe summer droughts would reduce the availability of insect prey, and increase the frequency of heathland fires. These factors may offset the advantages gained by milder winters.

Farther north, the Scottish avifauna is likely to be enhanced by species extending their range northwards from England. These may include European Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*, which may return to its previous haunts in Scotland, Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*, Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis*, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos minor*, Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*, Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca*, European Nuthatch *Sitta europaea* and Marsh Tit *Parus palustris*. Other species, such as Rufous Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*, may extend their ranges into northern England (Cadbury 1995).

For other resident species, global warming could prove more problematic. Farmland birds, such as Tree Sparrow, Grey Partridge *Perdix perdix*, Sky Lark, Corn Bunting and Linnet *Carduelis cannabina*, have already undergone severe declines during the past quarter-century. Global warming will allow farmers to grow new crops, and to turn previously uneconomic land, such as heaths and moors, into farmland, with potentially devastating consequences for species that depend on these habitats.

Britain and Ireland supports internationally important populations of seabirds such as Northern Gannet *Morus bassanus*, Puffin, Common Guillemot *Uria aalge* and Great Skua *Catharacta skua*. Like farmland birds, seabirds are already under great pressure, as a result of pollution and of food shortages caused by overfishing. By altering the marine ecosystems via global warming, we may tip the balance between breeding success and failure, leading to sudden and catastrophic population declines.

Long-distance migrants: songbirds

The strategy of long-distance migrants depends on a fine degree of synchronicity between the timing of migration and the life-cycles of the many plant and animal species on which the migrant depends for food, shelter and nesting-places. If just one of these factors goes out of synchronisation then the migratory strategy could become non-viable.

Migrants are also threatened by habitat loss caused by drought, both in their winter-quarters and at staging-posts on their migration routes. This may be offset, in the short-term at least, by greater breeding success as a result of improved conditions for breeding.

Prof. Dr Peter Berthold has, however, pointed out that the breeding success of migrants is directly dependent on the population sizes of resident species and early migrants competing for the same habitat (Berthold 1993). So, if resident species are able to take advantage of the earlier arrival of spring to begin breeding sooner, late returners such as Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin* and Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata* could find that their breeding opportunities become more limited.

Berthold (1993) also predicted that long-distance migrants are unlikely to be able to adapt their behaviour rapidly enough to cope with the speed of change. If, however, more short-distance migrants remain on their breeding-grounds all year around, it is possible that long-distance migrants may be able to take advantage of the resulting vacant niches in the Mediterranean basin.

A clue to which species may be able to respond to rapid change better than others comes from a current study (Sutherland in prep.). This shows that, while some species, such as Blackcap, are able to adapt their migratory strategies very quickly in response to changes in the environment, others, including Lesser Whitethroat and Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*, continue to follow historical migration routes which take them thousands of kilometres farther than the most direct route.

Long-distance migrants: waders

Amongst the World's greatest long-distance travellers are waders such as Red Knot *Calidris canutus*, Sanderling *C. alba* and Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*. These breed in the high Arctic, and migrate south to winter on the coasts of Europe, Africa and South America.

One commentator has already singled out the Red Knot as 'the classic example of a bird whose complex migratory strategy, which has evolved over thousands of years, may be put in peril by a rapidly warming world.' (Markham 1996).

Climate change threatens every aspect of the Red Knot's annual cycle:

- Alterations in the tundra breeding habitat, caused by an earlier growing season, will affect food supplies and nesting sites.
- Stopover sites, such as coastal estuaries, are threatened by rises in sea-level and changes in marine ecosystems.
- Wintering sites are also vulnerable to sea-level rises.

It will be worth monitoring the fortunes of the Red Knot closely during the

next few years, as it is likely to provide one of the best early-warning systems of a species' ability to cope with climate change.

Colonists, extinctions and range extensions

One of the more exciting aspects of climate change is the possibility that new breeding species may colonise Britain from the south and east. What is less welcome is the likelihood that others will become extinct as British breeding species as our climate becomes unsuitable.

Potential colonists from the south

Breeding ranges are largely governed by the availability of suitable habitat, which in turn affects food supply. One of the greatest influences on the formation of habitats is the prevailing climate.

Thus, the breeding (and indeed wintering) range of a particular species can be defined by isotherms. The July mean isotherm is that most generally used (Voous 1960; Harrison 1982).

In western Europe, the July isotherms run more or less east to west, but with a significant swing to the north in areas away from the moderating effect of the Atlantic Ocean. Thus, the 17°C isotherm runs just inland from the coast of northern France and the Low Countries, before swinging northeastwards to skirt the southern shores of the Baltic Sea and into northern Russia.

This, together with a sunnier summer climate, enables species such as the Golden Oriole to breed much farther north in Continental Europe than in Britain, where cloudy, wet summers reduce breeding success (Dagley 1994).

One effect of global warming will be to 'shift' the July mean isotherm northwards, although predictions of how far vary from approximately 150–230 km per 1°C of warming (Barkham 1994) to 200–300 km per 1°C (Briggs & Hossell 1995).

Thus, if temperatures rise by 2°C, the high end of the prediction for the year 2050, many species whose ranges are currently limited by the 17°C isotherm will become potential colonists—so long as they can get across the English Channel in sufficient numbers (Moss 1995).

One species, Zitting Cisticola, was first predicted to colonise Britain more than 20 years ago (Ferguson-Lees & Sharrock 1977). Like European Serin (which has so far failed to become established in Britain) and Cetti's Warbler (which has succeeded: Wotton *et al.* 1998), it extended its range rapidly across Europe during the first half of the twentieth century, reaching the Pas-de-Calais in the mid 1970s—just 80 km away from apparently suitable habitat in Kent's Stour Valley. Yet there have been just two British records since: in 1976 and 1977 (Dymond & Clarke 1978; Cade 1980).

One clue to the Zitting Cisticola's inability to colonise southeast England may be that it is largely resident on or near its breeding-grounds. To survive the winter, it requires January mean temperatures of at least 5°C, which would currently confine it to the extreme south and west of Britain. A 1°C rise in temperature, predicted by around the year 2020, would, however, bring Kent and Sussex well within its range (Moss 1995).

Other potential colonists may depend not just on temperature rises, but also on the nature of our new spring and summer climate. For example, a rise in temperatures of 1°-2°C, with little or no change in summer rainfall, would restrict colonisation to those species currently breeding in the damp, maritime areas of northern and western France, whose ranges fall within the area defined by the 17°C July isotherm. These include Hoopoe (already an irregular British breeder), Black Kite, Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*, the white-spotted race of Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica cyaneacula* and, perhaps finally establishing itself as a regular breeder, European Serin. Other potential colonists include Melodious Warbler *Hippolais polyglotta* and Western Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus bonelli*.

Another contender is Cattle Egret, one of the World's most successful bird species. In western Europe, it has spread rapidly northwards along the Atlantic coast of France, reaching Charente-Maritime in the early 1980s (Voisin 1991), and could soon join Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* (see Lock & Cook 1998) as a British breeding bird.

Potential colonists from the east

If, however, southern and eastern Britain begin to experience a more continental-type summer climate, with longer periods of sunshine and lower rainfall, then species currently breeding only to the east of Britain would become candidates for colonisation.

Or, in the case of three species, recolonisation. Climate change was a possible factor in the long-term declines of the Red-backed Shrike (Peakall 1962; Bibby 1973) and Wryneck *Jynx torquilla* (Monk 1963; Peal 1968), and may also have accelerated the disappearance of Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus* as a British breeder (Burton 1995). Drier, warmer summers might encourage them to return.

Eastern species currently spreading northwards and westwards across continental Europe, and whose range falls within the 17°C July isotherm, include six passerines: Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus*, Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis*, Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia*, Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*, Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum* and River Warbler *Locustella fluviatilis* (Hagemeijer & Blair 1997). All six are currently rare vagrants to Britain and migrate mainly in a southeasterly direction. Thrush Nightingale was predicted as a coloniser of Britain (Sharrock & Hildén 1983) and bred in the Netherlands in 1995 (van den Berg 1996), and the nest of a Penduline Tit was found in East Kent in 1990 (Spencer *et al.* 1993). Given time and suitable conditions, they should all be regarded as potential colonists.

Other species currently expanding north, northwest or west in northwest Europe include Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena*, Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*, Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina*, and, one of our most recent colonists, Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus* (Burton 1995). All have bred recently in Britain, and are likely to increase.

Introduced and alien species

One feature of our post-war avifauna has been the success of species introduced, wittingly or unwittingly, by Man. Indeed, of the ten greatest expansions in range reported in the 1988-91 *Breeding Atlas*, no fewer than four were introduced aliens: Rose-ringed Parakeet, Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis*, Mandarin Duck *Aix galericulata* and Egyptian Goose (Gibbons *et al.* 1993).

In the absence of natural predators, aliens are able to expand their ranges and populations very rapidly. They are helped by the abundance of artificially provided food and mild winter climate, especially in southern Britain.

The handful of 'official' aliens in Category C of the British List is, however, merely the tip of the iceberg in terms of potential colonists. Recent studies have shown that many other species, including Muscovy Duck *Cairina moschata*, have populations which could be described as self-supporting (Vinicombe *et al.* 1993).

It is worth noting that, in areas of the World where readily available food is combined with a suitable climate, aliens rapidly become pests. In Florida, more than 170 exotic species have been recorded in a free-flying state, of which 61 have reportedly bred in the wild (Pranty 1996).

Closer to home, exotic species, mainly popular cagebirds, are causing problems to native species in Portugal (Costa *et al.* 1997). Milder winter temperatures combined with a longer breeding season may allow many other alien species to become established in southern Britain in the coming decades.

Potential extinctions

Of all the likely effects of global warming, one of the least welcome will be the disappearance of some of our rarest breeding species. Those whose range lies mainly to the north of Britain are the most vulnerable, although in some cases their decline may be offset by careful habitat management.

In recent years, Red-necked Phalarope has bucked the trend associated with a warmer climate by increasing its tiny breeding population on Shetland, largely as a result of intensive habitat management by the RSPB. Nevertheless, this may have simply postponed the extinction of this boreal species as a British breeder.

Other 'northern' species likely to suffer as a result of global warming, and possibly even disappear as British breeders, include Red-throated Diver *Gavia stellata*, Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus*, Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*, Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra* and Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus*, together with waders such as Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*, Greenshank and Wood Sandpiper (Cadbury 1995). Other sporadic breeders from the north, such as Snowy Owl, Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*, Purple Sandpiper *C. maritima*, Horned Lark *Eremophila alpestris* and Lapland Longspur *Calcarius lapponicus*, have already retreated.

The arctic-alpine climatic zone of the Cairngorm plateau and other parts of the Scottish Highlands support populations of Ptarmigan, Snow Bunting and Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus*. Recent studies suggest that this unique habitat

is now under severe threat from global warming; indeed the RSPB has gone so far as to predict that the habitat itself will become 'extinct' during the next 50 years (Briggs & Hossett 1995). Just as increases in temperature allow vegetation to spread northwards, they also allow plants to spread higher in altitude, by approximately 150 m for every 1°C of warming (Barkham 1994). Colonisation by low-altitude plants would destroy the food supply for the specialist bird species, leading to their eventual extinction.

Winter visitors

Britain and Ireland, with its relatively mild winter climate, supports internationally significant wintering populations of many species of bird, notably about half of Europe's wildfowl, and approximately two million waders (Prater 1981). These include Pink-footed Goose *Anser brachyrhynchus* (80% of the World population), the Greenland race of White-fronted Goose *A. albifrons flavirostris* (50%), Barnacle Goose *Branta leucopsis* (30%) and Tundra Swan *Cygnus columbianus* (30%) (Batten *et al.* 1990). These birds spend the winter here because they are unable to stay on or near their northern breeding-grounds, where below-freezing temperatures, ice and snow make food supplies difficult or impossible to find.

Global warming, predicted by the IPCC to be greater nearer the poles, may make it possible for some or all of these birds to remain close to their breeding areas, or to spend the winter elsewhere—for example around the Baltic Sea.

A rise in mean winter temperatures of 2°-3°C, predicted by the year 2050, would make large areas of the Baltic suitable for birds to spend the winter (Hossett 1994). Such a warming trend might also put an end to invasions of wildfowl from the Netherlands caused by harsh weather, as occurred in the winter of 1978/79 (Chandler 1981). Species such as Smew *Mergellus albellus* might become scarce vagrants, rather than regular winter visitors.

Meanwhile, birds that do attempt to spend the winter here may experience food shortages and habitat loss brought about by the disappearance of coastal wetlands following rises in sea-level.

Britain and Ireland also plays host in winter to millions of songbirds from continental Europe, including an estimated 10-20 million Chaffinches, and several million Blackbirds, Song Thrushes *Turdus philomelos* and Robins, together with smaller numbers of Fieldfares *Turdus pilaris*, Redwings *T. iliacus* and Bramblings *Fringilla montifringilla* (Lack 1986).

Meanwhile, many of our so-called 'resident' breeders, including finches, thrushes and chats, head southward, to spend the winter in France or Iberia.

It is difficult to predict what effect global warming might have on these movements. Will some birds stay put for the winter, only to find that they must compete with immigrants from Europe? Will we find ourselves with vastly reduced winter populations if the European birds stay put? Or will some kind of new equilibrium be established?

Global warming and vagrancy

It is often assumed that the vagrancy of birds, by its very nature, is inherently

unpredictable. Attempts have, however, been made to quantify records and discover patterns (Sharrock 1974b; Williamson 1974; Vinicombe & Cottridge 1996).

The rise and fall of American landbird vagrants

By analysing the patterns of transatlantic landbird vagrancy over more than a century, Williamson showed that the surge in records of American landbirds in Britain and Ireland from the early 1950s to the 1970s was not, as had been assumed, simply a result of increased observer coverage, but in fact was due to a change in the Atlantic weather systems as a result of a spell of cooling during the 1950s and 1960s.

As the North Atlantic climate deteriorated, the relative positions of two crucial weather systems (the Icelandic low and the Azores high) began to change. As a consequence, the mean path of the Atlantic storm-track moved south, making it more likely that transatlantic vagrants would make landfall in southwest Britain and Ireland, rather than farther north (Williamson 1974; Moss 1995).

The last decade or so, since global warming began to take hold, has seen a significant fall in records of American landbirds from traditional southwestern sites, with a noticeable increase in records from farther north, such as St Kilda and Shetland. It seems likely that global warming has restored the prevailing conditions of the early twentieth century, during which there was only a handful of records of American landbirds in southern Britain.

Other effects of global warming on vagrancy

As a result of global warming, it is likely that mean wind-speeds will increase, especially at the spring and autumn equinoxes. The effects of wind speed and direction on vagrancy are somewhat contentious, and there are differing views on the subject (Moss 1995; Vinicombe & Cottridge 1996), but it is generally accepted that they have a significant effect on spring overshooting, transatlantic vagrancy and autumn vagrancy from the east.

It is also true, however, that prevailing weather conditions are only one of several factors accounting for vagrancy. Perhaps the most fundamental of these is the migratory behaviour of the species concerned, such as the 'reverse migration' of eastern species such as Pallas's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus* and Yellow-browed Warbler *P. inornatus* (Rabøl 1969).

Another potential source of vagrants is as a result of eruptions: sudden and irregular mass movements of birds away from their breeding areas, usually as a result of a population boom followed by food shortages (Campbell & Lack 1985). If areas such as the central Asian steppes become hotter and drier, we may see a repeat of westward irruptions of species such as Pallas's Sandgrouse *Syrhaptes paradoxus*.

As Arctic and sub-Arctic climates warm up more rapidly than those farther south, food shortages caused by lack of synchrony between the life cycles of birds and their prey may force northern species such as Gyr Falcon *Falco rusticolus* and Snowy Owl to head southwards in search of new sources of food.

Although it is difficult to forecast what effects the combinations of changes in weather patterns and shifts in migratory behaviour will have on particular species, I believe that we can predict with some certainty that the coming decades will see changes in vagrancy patterns. Some species are likely to become more frequent in their appearance, and others less so.

Changes could include:

- Spring overshooting to become more frequent and regular, as a result of warmer, earlier springs caused by dominant high pressure. North African species to appear with greater regularity.
- Long-distance autumn vagrancy from the eastern Palearctic to become more erratic and irregular in occurrence.
- Spring appearances of both transatlantic and eastern Palearctic vagrants to increase, at least in the short term, as a result of greater survival rates due to mild winters.
- Transatlantic vagrancy to continue at lower rates than before, with a shift to higher latitudes.
- Vagrancy from unexpected quarters to increase: notably irruptive behaviour from the north and east.

In the medium to longer term, however, there are likely to be fewer and fewer vagrants, as a result of declines in bird populations caused by the effects of global warming and other factors.

What can be done to mitigate effects of global climate change?

Britain's birds in the year 2100

Imagine, if you will, the British avifauna a century hence. Long-term forecasting is not without its pitfalls, but the weight of evidence suggests that today's predictions are likely to be more accurate than those in the past. If they are fulfilled, then our avifauna will certainly be very different from what we know today.

There will be fewer breeding species. Many northerly ones will either have disappeared or have much reduced populations. Others, especially those which currently have a southerly range, will have expanded northwards and increased in population. There will be new additions to our breeding avifauna, mainly species currently expanding their ranges on the Continent.

Many species dependent on a specialised habitat, however, such as farmland, heathland or wetland birds, will have decreased in numbers and range.

Resident breeding species, especially highly adaptable ones such as pigeons, crows and gulls, will have increased, and, together with a greater variety of alien species, will dominate our birdlife.

In winter, formerly crowded estuaries and coastal wetlands will support a much reduced variety of species and numbers of birds. Meanwhile, some of our rarer winter visitors will have been replaced by increasing numbers of former summer visitors spending the whole year here. Long-distance migrants will have undergone a series of catastrophic population crashes.

What can we do?

What can we do to stop this doomsday scenario coming true? First, it is important to understand that we cannot stop global warming: it is already too far advanced to do so even if the political will were there. It may, however, be possible to mitigate the effects, and thereby reduce the consequences for our birdlife and other flora and fauna.

The World's politicians—first at Rio in 1995, then at the World Conference on Climate Change at Kyoto, Japan, in December 1997—are at last beginning to address the problem. Reductions in greenhouse gases have been agreed, although many environmentalists still fear that this is a case of 'too little, too late'.

As individuals, we can contribute, by taking the problem of global warming more seriously, and putting it to the forefront of our considerations of the future of Britain's birdlife. We can also help to monitor changes in bird ranges and populations—indeed, one of the most important pieces of evidence that global warming is already occurring was discovered by scientists working with data provided by amateur enthusiasts (Crick *et al.* 1997). In the future, the efforts of birdwatchers in carrying out local and national bird surveys and atlas studies are likely to prove more valuable than ever.

Changes in conservation strategy

It is important to consider the effects of global warming on our current conservation strategy. For the last 50 years or more, organisations such as the RSPB, the local wildlife trusts and English Nature have pursued a 'location-based' strategy, purchasing or designating important habitats and areas of land as reserves or SSSIs.

With the onset of global warming, this strategy looks at best naive, and at worst virtually useless. As many habitats change beyond all recognition, others 'shift' northwards, and some simply disappear altogether, we need to rethink our whole approach to conservation for the twenty-first century.

Indeed, the RSPB has already begun to do so, by defining four categories of UK habitats, categorised according to the likely impacts of climate change (Briggs & Hossell 1995):

1. **Extinction**—habitats that probably will not survive in the UK. At present, there is only one in this category: the montane habitat of the Scottish high-tops.
2. **Relocation/re-creation**—habitats which could survive only in another location. These include lowland heath, lowland wet grassland, upland bogs and heath, and the native pine of the Scottish Caledonian forests.
3. **In situ conservation**—habitats which could be conserved by management in their current location. This includes many of the habitats in category 2, together with upland and lowland broad-leaved woodland, rivers and streams, and arable land.
4. **Robust**—habitats that do not need conservation measures to survive climate change. These mainly include far-less-important habitats, such as improved pasture and built-up areas.

This radical shift in the RSPB's policy has gone almost unnoticed since first being published—despite the fact that it heralds a change in approach to conservation as fundamental as the earlier move away from emphasising individual species and towards conserving whole habitats and their attendant ecosystems.

What does it really mean? Well, effectively it means producing new habitats from scratch, as the RSPB is already doing by creating a huge reedbed at Lakenheath Fen, in the heart of East Anglia. This may already be too late: all but three of the UK's booming Great Bitterns are now threatened by saline incursions caused by sea-level rises (Barnaby Briggs *in litt.*).

Future projects might include creating lowland heaths in northern Britain, ready for a northward shift in the range of Dartford Warbler, and inland reedbeds and marshes, to compensate for losses of coastal habitat caused by rises in sea-level; and trying to re-create the unique habitat of the Caledonian pine forests on the moors of Caithness and Sutherland.

This presents a formidable challenge for our conservation bodies, as acknowledged by Dr James Cadbury of the RSPB: 'Rapid climate change will emphasise the need for corridors or "stepping stones" so that the less mobile species can migrate between blocks of habitat fragmented by land-use changes. Barriers to migration may increase the necessity to translocate stocks within the UK or reintroduce species from the Continent.' (Cadbury 1995).

Nevertheless, the RSPB still believes that prevention is better than cure, as Cadbury concluded: 'The main conservation aim, however, should be to slow down the rate of climate change by increasing awareness of the effects of global warming and pressing for more resolute steps to be taken to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.'

Another tough decision to be taken is whether or not to continue to conserve species which, although rare in Britain, are globally widespread, such as Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* or Red-necked Phalarope; or to devote our limited resources to safeguard species and habitats of international importance, such as Corn Crake *Crex crex* and lowland heath.

Whatever happens, conservation bodies will need to be more adaptable. In the words of one observer: 'There is also a need to be more flexible and opportunist, rather than spending large sums of money trying to secure species in places where they have no long-term future . . . Those of us engaged in wildlife conservation may have to swallow some of our prejudices . . . and become much more liberal in our approach to species introduction. Better that than a despairing acceptance of an overall and widespread impoverishment of our wildlife' (Barkham 1994).

Whether or not we succeed will become apparent within the next few decades as we discover just how resilient and adaptable is our avifauna. In the meantime, we and the birds are riding together on an out-of-control rollercoaster. Let us hope that, when it eventually comes to a halt, we will all have survived.

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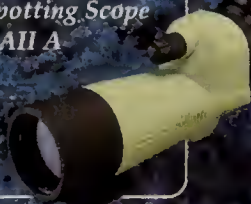
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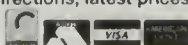
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Stephen Moss, 40 Gilpin Avenue, London SW14 8QY



LOOKING BACK

Fifty years ago: 'LOCAL REPORTS. *Nineteenth Report of the Devon Bird-Watching and Preservation Society*, 1946. The Devon report is as usual very well produced and surprisingly detailed. We congratulate the editorial committee on having at last abandoned the exasperating practice of treating the birds in alphabetical order, which meant that a reader wishing for information about any particular group, say waders, had to hunt about all over the report . . .

'*South-Eastern Bird Report, being an Account of Bird-life in Hampshire, Kent, Surrey and Sussex during 1946*. Although this report is titled as above, the Hampshire section, reprinted from the *Hampshire Field Club Proceedings*, is in fact for 1945. It contains much valuable information, but not always sufficiently critically edited. We note that Major E. M. Cawkell and Mr G. des Forges will in future act as sub-editors for Kent and Sussex respectively.' (*Brit. Birds* 41: 251-252, August 1948)



MONTHLY MARATHON



The first stage, the female duck with brood (plate 42), was named as Common Pochard *Aythya ferina* (85%), Canvasback *A. valisineria* (10%), Redhead *A. americana* (4%) and Ferruginous Duck *A. nyroca* (1%). The second stage, the mainly submerged waterbird (plate 49), was named as Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope* (62%), Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus* Red-necked Grebe *P. grisegena* (4%) and Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* (3%), with a few votes for Slavonian Grebe *P. auritus* and Black necked Grebe *P. nigricollis*, and one for Hooded Merganser *Lophodytes cucullatus*. The third stage, the warbler carrying food for its nestlings (plate 79), was named as Western Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus bonelli* (51%) and Eastern Bonelli's Warbler *P. orientalis* (46%), with a few votes for Common Chiffchaff *P. collybita* (3%), and one each for Upcher's Warbler *Hippolais languida*, Icterine Warbler *H. icterina*, Barred Warbler *Sylvia nisoria*, Common Redstart *hoenicurus phoenicurus* and Red-tailed Wheatear *Oenanthe xanthopyrmyna*. The majority view was correct in every case. The Common Pochards were photographed in West Glamorgan in June 1991 by Harold E. Grenfell; the Eurasian Wigeon was photographed in Essex in January 1997 by Bob Glover; and the Western Bonelli's Warbler was photographed in Portugal in June 1989 by Dr Kevin Carlson.

After these first three stages, 19% of entrants have all three correct, 9% have the last two correct, 23% have only the last one correct, and 49% are back at the starting line.

Remember, in this Marathon, one slip and the competitor has to start again; it is a sequence of ten correct answers which is the minimum requirement to win the SUNBIRD holiday prize.

The identity of the bird in the fourth stage (plate 88) will be given next month (your entry must arrive by 15th August), and the fifth-stage bird is shown below (plate 94).



▲ 94. 'Monthly marathon.' Photo no. 144. Fifth stage in tenth 'Marathon'. Identify the species. Read the rules (*Brit. Birds* 91: 305), then send in your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th September 1998.



NOTES

These contributions have all been assessed by the eight members of either the Behaviour Notes Panel or the Identification Notes Panel.

Mandarin Ducks and Mallards diving for acorns

On 4th October 1994, while walking beside the River Dee from Chester to Eccleston, Cheshire, I watched a drake Mandarin Duck *Aix galericulata* on the river under the overhanging branches of oak *Quercus* and alder *Alnus*, with a second drake on an oak bough just above the river. I was surprised to see the duck dive repeatedly, totally submerging for about four seconds, and resurfacing each time with an acorn in his bill, which he then swallowed whole. Seven accompanying Mallards *Anas platyrhynchos* also dived and collected acorns in the same manner, and after five minutes the second Mandarin Duck joined in. The depth of the water was estimated at about 70 cm, the acorns being clearly visible below.

BWP (vol. 1) states that adult Mallards only occasionally dive 'e.g. for submerged acorns in autumn and winter', and that the Mandarin Duck rarely dives. The combination which I observed appears rather unusual.

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Common Kestrels and Great Grey Shrike hunting insects by artificial light

On 13th August 1991, in Czestochowa, central Poland, we observed six Common Kestrels *Falco tinnunculus* catching insects near the very well-illuminated tower of Jasna Góra monastery. They continued until 21.30 hours, sunset having been at about 18.50 hours. On the following day, seven Common Kestrels were foraging in the same way, one male catching insects right up to 22.30 hours.

On 28th April 1991, in Wrocław, west Poland, a Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor* was seen foraging in the light of streetlamps. At about 20.00 hours, 37 minutes after sunset, it perched on the lamps and from time to time flew up after moths, some hunting sallies being successful. The shrike finally flew away in the direction of a wood some 100 m away, where a female Great Grey Shrike was sitting on a nest.

PIOTR TRYJANOWSKI and GRZEGORZ LOREK

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Common Coots killing Carrion Crow

On 4th June 1990, at Leighton Moss RSPB Reserve, Lancashire, I saw a pair of Common Coots *Fulica atra* kill a Carrion Crow *Corvus corone*. The crow had been harassing a small colony of Black-headed Gulls *Larus ridibundus* when one of the gulls struck it heavily, knocking it into the water.

Unfortunately for the crow, it fell almost on top of the coots' nest, whereupon the pair of coots set upon it aggressively, striking at it with their claws, or holding it down under the water, which was approximately 15-20 cm deep. As the seconds ticked by, it was obvious that the hapless crow was doomed; wounded and waterlogged, it eventually succumbed after the attack, which lasted about 1-1½ minutes. I do not know whether the coots' nest contained eggs or young.

J. WOOD

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EDITORIAL COMMENT Although Common Coots have been recorded killing a Carrion Crow (*Brit. Birds* 63: 384), it was not seen how that incident started; Mr Wood, however, was able to observe the entire event from beginning to end. In another instance, two Common Coots attacked and drowned a Black-headed Gull which alighted on the water near their dependent young (*Brit. Birds* 75: 535-536).

Razorbills with greyish flanks

During the large 'wreck' of auks (Alcidae) in February 1983 (*Bird Study* 31: 79-88), I examined over 100 dead Razorbills *Alca torda* from Yorkshire beaches. Among these were two with lavender-grey lower flanks (plate 95). Both were females at least four years old, aged by the presence of one white and two black bill-grooves (see *Ringling & Migration* 9: 11-17) and with fully developed supraorbital skull ridges. Of many dead Razorbills which I have examined over the years, these are the only two which have had grey flanks, and I was unaware of the recorded presence of this feature until reading, in October 1996, Peter Lyngs's observation (*Brit. Birds* 89: 453) that it was shown by 20% of Razorbills attending colonies in the central Baltic Sea; an editorial comment to that note stated that neither Dr M. P. Harris nor Prof. T. R. Birkhead had ever seen grey-flanked Razorbills during their prolonged studies of auks in Britain, and both were unaware of any mention of this character in the literature. In view of the large numbers of such Razorbills in the Baltic, it is perhaps strange that none has ever been recorded in Britain, and one is tempted to assume that grey flank coloration is absent or, at best, very scarce in the British populations.

Of the 278 recoveries of ringed auks (Common Guillemot *Uria aalge*, Razorbill and Atlantic Puffin *Fratercula arctica*) reported during the 1983 'wreck', 94% had been ringed in Britain, 4% (all Razorbills) in Iceland and 2% in Norway (*Bird Study* 31: 89-94). P. Hope Jones *et al.* (*Seabird* 8: 9-14) examined 724 dead Razorbills and concluded that only 20 (2.8%) could be allocated by size to the nominate race (Scandinavian and Russian populations). The wing lengths of the two Yorkshire birds, 195 mm and 200 mm, are around the lowermost limit of the range for the nominate race (198-220 mm), and this, coupled with the known British origin of the majority of auks in the 'wreck', would perhaps indicate that they belonged to the race *islandica*, whose breeding range includes Britain and Ireland. This does not, however, constitute definite proof that grey-flanked Razorbills occur in British



▲ 95. Adult female Razorbill *Alca torda* with lavender-grey lower flanks, from the February 1983 'wreck', Yorkshire (Ann Mettam)

colonies, although I suspect that they do. An awareness of the character, which is not strikingly obvious, may lead to their discovery.

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Two Reed Warblers laying in same nest

On 20th June 1994, at Chew Valley Lake, Avon, I found the nest of a Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* containing one egg. On 25th June it held four eggs, and on 5th July two eggs and three nestlings. On 14th July there were three normally developing young, which were ringed, one newly hatched chick and an unhatched egg, and by 21st only an unhatched egg. The fifth egg would appear to have been laid on 29th June, seven days after the start of incubation of the original clutch; it seems likely, therefore, that it was laid by a second female. In checks of more than 1,300 Reed Warbler nests, I have on a number of occasions suspected (because of different egg types) that more than one hen has laid in a nest. I have never, however, found such an asynchronous hatch before.

D. WARDEN

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EDITORIAL COMMENT Prof. Ian Newton has commented: 'This could be egg-dumping when nests have been destroyed by Common Cuckoos *Cuculus canorus* or other warblers.'

Rooks feeding inside poultry huts

Concerning the subject of Rooks *Corvus frugilegus* entering buildings (*Brit. Birds* 91: 64): on my farm near Driffield, East Yorkshire, I have frequently observed both Rooks and Carrion Crows *C. corone* entering poultry huts to feed on eggs and on grain from hoppers. The huts are circular, 3 m in diameter, each with an entrance door 1.5 m × 1.5 m.

I first noticed this behaviour during October 1996, mostly before 10.00 GMT, involving up to five birds in each hut. This continued until May 1997, resuming in October 1997.

R. W. PEACOCK

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Common Starlings and Red-legged Partridges collecting insects from parked vehicles

On 10th August 1994, at Eastleigh railway station, Hampshire, I saw two Common Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris* fly in and inspect the flat, vertical front of a large locomotive at rest in a siding. They perched on the light mountings, brackets and other protruding features and proceeded to peck at the surrounding area; although I could not see the objects of their attention, I concluded that they were feeding on impacted insect remains. This behaviour continued for perhaps two or three minutes, before the two flew away together. For some time, I have been aware of similar activities by a pair of Red-legged Partridges *Alectoris rufa*, which peck the remains of insects from the registration plates of cars parked at an Isle of Wight hospital.

DAVID BRAZIER

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EDITORIAL COMMENT House Sparrows *Passer domesticus* have also been noted collecting insects from cars (*Brit. Birds* 77: 121).



LETTERS

The death of ornithology

The lead story in 'News and comment' on the increasing average age of ornithologists involved in bird-monitoring projects in Sweden (*Brit. Birds* 91: 203) is interesting, but may not be such bad news.

If the same is true in this country, perhaps we can hope that the long, shallow declines in so many bird populations are due, at least in part, to the long, shallow declines in the faculties of the ageing birdwatchers who monitor them.

IAN D. MOORHOUSE

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Re-establishment of Great Bustards in England

It was with much interest that I noted the 'Looking back' entry in the April issue (*Brit. Birds* 98: 123). I looked up the article referred to from April 1973 (*Brit. Birds* 66: 133-135): an Editorial concerning the introduction and re-establishment of birds and the reasons behind such activities.

The project to re-establish the Great Bustard *Otis tarda* did not meet with the hoped-for success at Porton Down, Wiltshire. The one surviving bird from the project, a male, is now kept at Whipsnade Wild Animal Park in Bedfordshire.

The Great Bustard Group (a member of the IUCN Species Survival Commission Bustard Specialist Group) is working with other organisations to investigate the chance of successful re-establishment of the Great Bustard into Britain, and, if appropriate, to pursue the idea to its natural conclusion.

I believe that re-establishment of this species could have only a positive effect on our native avifauna. The Great Bustard would not displace or conflict with any other species, and, being such a high-profile bird, could induce changes to grassland habitats that would also be positive for species such as Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedicephalus* and Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra*, which share the same habitat.

A fundamental principle, to which the Great Bustard Group will adhere, is that no release would be sanctioned unless there was a broad level of scientific agreement that the project would meet with success.

That the first attempt was not successful has in no way lessened our determination. One has only to look at the success of the releases of White-tailed Eagles *Haliaeetus albicilla* and Red Kites *Milvus milvus* to be encouraged to pursue a second attempt with Great Bustards.

DAVID WATERS

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The Cirl Bunting in Britain

I found Roger Penhallurick's letter (*Brit. Birds* 91: 146-148) on Cirl Buntings *Emberiza cirlus* of great interest, as I am currently engaged in extensive research on historical aspects of farming and birds.

To some extent, however, I sense that he is trying to have it both ways. Either the species was overlooked until Montagu pointed it out, which the bulk of his letter argues, or it was confined to southwest England where Montagu found it, which is his final conclusion. In the latter case, the probability that it was then in the process of colonising England must be high. We may, I think, rule out the idea that it was a long-standing resident in England which was restricted to the southwest in the eighteenth century by unfavourable climatic factors, namely the frequency of severe winters and poor summers. The difficulty with that argument is simply that such unfavourable climatic conditions were even more frequent, and in the winter more severe, in the seventeenth century and earlier (see Burton 1995). Arguing that the Cirl Bunting is strongly influenced by such climatic

factors thus actually reinforces the idea that it was a fairly new colonist when discovered.

I do not believe that the Cirl Bunting is influenced solely by climatic variation for the same reason that Dr A. D. Evans (*Brit. Birds* 91: 148) does not. The mechanism is not obvious. In particular, nineteenth-century authors stressed repeatedly that seed-eating passerines, except usually Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*, gathered at stackyards and barn doors (flail-threshing floors) to feed in severe winter weather, exploiting the substantial resources provided not just by the waste from threshing, but also by the ricks themselves; Cirl Buntings liked hay ricks. Such flocks of seed-eaters were frequently regarded as pests, which gives a clear indication of the numbers involved. Corn Buntings *Miliaria calandra* could and did strip the thatch off ricks; farmers retaliated by eating Corn Bunting pudding. In the nineteenth century, declines of such species following severe winters seemed to be recorded infrequently, if at all, except, again, for Goldfinch.

Few nineteenth-century authors say very much about status change or colonisation within the Cirl Bunting's main range. The nineteenth-century position was summarised by Aplin (1892), who noted in his introduction that, once discovered by Montagu, 'the Cirl Bunting has been found to be a resident species in many other parts of southern England as well as in some of the home counties and western midlands.' He also noted some recent expansion into Wales. It is clear that nineteenth-century ornithologists considered that they were unravelling the distribution of a bird that was there, not chronicling a major expansion or colonisation. Thus, I suggest that Penhallurick is correct in his belief that the bird was generally overlooked (the fact that White did not know it argues only possible absence from Selborne, not from the whole of Hampshire), but wrong then to argue for a more restricted distribution arising from climatic factors in the early nineteenth century, followed by an expansion in the period of climatic amelioration. I also suggest that Dr Evans is wrong in suggesting (*Brit. Birds* 91: 267-282) a 'spectacular expansion' in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, although some took place around the margins of the main range, as Holloway's (1996) map suggests.

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REVIEWS

A Field Guide to Birds of The Gambia and Senegal.

By Clive Barlow & Tim Wachter. Illustrated by Tony Disley.

Pica Press, Mountfield, 1997. 400 pages; 48 colour plates. ISBN 1-873403-32-1. £26.00.

On my first visit to The Gambia, in February 1973, with no previous African experience, the only available reference books were Bannerman's two-volume *The Birds of West and Equatorial Africa* (1953) and the non-passerine volume of Mackworth-Praed & Grant's *Birds of West Central and Western Africa* (1970-73). None of these weighty tomes was either aimed at field observers or suitable for field usage, and evening reference to the books in the hotel room left many unresolved identifications. In 1977, Serle & Morel's *A Field Guide to the Birds of West Africa* was published. Unfortunately, it was a huge disappointment, and virtually useless for sorting out identifications within many groups of species, not least the raptors, for which a two-week trip to The Gambia in the dry season can produce over 30 species.

Through the 1980s and 1990s, when I was fortunate to make nine visits to The Gambia or Senegal, there was a huge increase in numbers of visiting birders, mainly from Europe, and a parallel increase in young Gambian ornithologists keen to act as guides for foreign birders. Until now, all have been seriously disadvantaged by the lack of even a reasonable field guide.

The problem is now solved: this new book is quite simply excellent, and is certainly one of the very best true field guides for any region in the World. Yes, I rate it that highly. It is clearly evident that great thought and consideration went into the planning and design of the book—it really is user-friendly, nothing is missing that should be included, and nothing included is a waste of space. The end result is a masterpiece: a concise and informative 13-page introduction, 48 outstanding colour plates by Tony Disley with facing-page summaries of status and main identification features, and a main body of 272 pages of thoroughly helpful species texts.

Of the 660 or so species that have been recorded in The Gambia or Senegal, 570 are illustrated in colour, with male, female, non-breeding and immature plumages

shown whenever relevant, and flight views are depicted for all seabirds, raptors, storks, quails, terns, nightjars, swifts and hirundines. Colour representation is excellent and the general impressions, shapes, proportions and accuracy of detail produced by Disley are, with very few exceptions, of the highest standard. He definitely gets promotion to the premier division of my league of bird artists.

The main species texts have sections on identification (including separation from likely confusing species), flight characteristics (for raptors), habits, voice, status and distribution and, where relevant, breeding. Clive Barlow and Tim Wachter have done a great job here, and visiting birders will now even have a serious chance of correctly identifying some of those wonderful cisticolas.

During several days of intermittent browsing, I have found very few mistakes: the illustration of Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* on page 48 is numbered 7 instead of 6, and there is an unfortunate mis-spelling of Egyptian on page 46. A more important error occurs in both the illustration and facing-page notes for Grey Woodpecker *Dendropicos goertae*—it *does* have fairly obvious barring on the flight feathers. My one serious criticism is the lack of illustrations for some 90 species. Although nearly all of them are either vagrants from the Nearctic or Palearctic or African species which are extremely rare residents in, or vagrants to, the outlying areas of Senegal, the unlikelihood of most visiting birders finding them does not justify their exclusion. Another seven or eight plates could have accommodated all these species without, surely, significantly increasing the price of the book.

In the main, however, congratulations are due to the authors and artists on a superb achievement. If you have been to, or are going to visit, The Gambia, Senegal or any of the surrounding West African countries, this book should be at the top of your packing list, next to sun-hat. *NICK DYMOND*

Seabirds in the Marine Environment.

Edited by J. H. S. Blaxter.

Proceedings of an ICES International Symposium held in Glasgow, Scotland, 22nd-24th November 1996. Academic Press, London, 1997. 238 pages, 22 papers. ISSN 1054-3139. Paperback £35.95.

(ICES Journal of Marine Science, vol. 54, no. 4, August 1997; also issued as ICES Marine Science Symposia, vol. 204)

This conference was sponsored jointly by the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) and the Seabird Group. The papers, from the tropical Pacific to the Gulf of Mexico, include a wealth of facts: Kittiwakes *Rissa tridactyla* do not thrive without sandeels (Ammodytidae) in the North Sea, nor do Herring Gulls *Larus argentatus* in the St Lawrence Seaway now the Cod *Gadus morrhua* has gone. Very small temperature changes have profound effects on fish migration, and hence on seabirds.

Kittiwakes and Atlantic Puffins *Fratercula arctica* both feed on sandeels, but one dives to 30 cm, the other to 68 m. A pelagic trip off the Ebro Delta is the way to see Audouin's Gull *L. audouinii*, the most numerous bird around the fishing fleet there. The 18 million Icelandic seabirds eat 8% of one of the fish stocks. Curiously, in Iceland, mercury levels in the north are higher than those in the south. This journal is of interest to those concerned with seabirds, fishing and pollution.

DICK NEWELL

Passerines and Passerine Migration in Eilat 1984-1993.

By John H. Morgan & Hadoram Shirihai.

International Birdwatching Center, Eilat, 1997. 50 pages; 20 colour photographs. Paperback £17.00.

Bird observatories and ringing/banding stations are invariably staffed and visited by dedicated enthusiasts who faithfully log the details of their records each day. Over the years, this database builds up and becomes not only increasingly rewarding to analyse, but also increasingly daunting. These authors deserve great credit for carrying out their desk-top study of a decade's data, which has enabled normally individually insignificant statistics to be combined to confirm or to reveal a variety of patterns and trends.

The book begins with nine pages of introduction concerning the ringing station, the area's importance for migrants and its habitats, migrant-passerine strategy, the data-analysis methods adopted and an explanation of the species accounts. The colour photographs, over half of which are of hand-held birds, are arranged on eight unnumbered centre pages, while a list of references fills the last page. The remaining 40 pages are occupied by the species accounts themselves, which total over 200 and sensibly cover many near-passerines

and Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix* as well as all the passerines.

More than half of the species, including some common residents and migrants and many of the rarest visitors, are dealt with in three lines or less. For the major rarities, this unfortunately represents a missed opportunity. Many migrants, however, ranging from uncommon to abundant, receive commendably full treatment, and the text is littered with histograms and tables. These accounts are very largely based on ringing data and contain information on wing-length, weight, moult, ageing, longevity, preferred habitat, changes of status, subspecific identification (including the discovery of a new subspecies of Sand Martin *Riparia riparia eilata*), the origins of controlled birds, the countries where recoveries have been made, and the intensity of migration in both spring and autumn.

This fascinating little book also includes much discussion and speculation and is an absorbing read for all ringers and for all birders with an interest in migration and the Middle East.

PETER LANSDOWN

The Barn Owl.

By Colin Shawyer.

Arlequin Press, Chelmsford, Essex, 1998. 213 pages; 18 colour plates; 54 black-and-white plates; 29 line-drawings. ISBN 1-900159-70-8. £18.95.

The Director of Conservation and Research at the Hawk and Owl Trust has written this latest account of this popular bird. It is well written and comprehensive, and covers, as well as the more obvious life-cycle topics, causes of mortality, reasons for the marked decline in numbers of Barn Owls *Tyto alba* in Britain, and conservation. This last chapter includes details of what has been done and what is now recommended, which are not entirely the same. The controversial

rearing and re-establishment programme, which flourished in the late 1980s, but with exceedingly poor results, is now strictly licensed. The author confirms that habitat restoration, especially the maintenance of rough grass margins to fields, rivers and ditches, coupled with provision of nest sites, is the way forward, and he ends on an optimistic note, by forecasting a considerable population increase and spread within the next few years. MALCOLM OGILVIE

The Birds of Caernarfonshire. By John Barnes. (The Cambrian Ornithological Society, Caernarfon, 1997. 169 pages. ISBN 0-9532498-0-8. Paperback £9.50) This book summarises the status of birds in Caernarfonshire as perceived by the county recorder. Probably as a result of local observers failing to submit their observations, the book is disappointingly incomplete and, for many species, it fails to provide the detailed statement of current status and distribution that one would hope to find in a county avifauna. REG THORPE

Birds of Liberia. By Wolf Gatter. (Pica Press, Mountfield, 1998. 320 pages. ISBN 1-873403-63-1. £40.00) The bulk of this well-produced book consists of an atlas of the birds, but it also contains descriptions of the ecology and habitats of Liberia. A map accompanies most species accounts and there are colour and black-and-white photographs of 64 species and of various habitats. For students of West African birding, this is essential reading; for the rest of us, it is an unexpected delight, and a reminder of how much else there is to discover in the World. COLIN BRADSHAW

Borneo Rainforest. CD. By John Paterson. (John Paterson, Winchester, 1995. Total running time 68 minutes. £10.00) An atmospheric day in the rainforests of Sabah, from the dewdrops at dawn to the insect orchestra at dusk. Each

track runs into the next, but an index aids identification of the 24 principal bird species (though there are more in the background) and four primates, including the bizarre grunting of a female Orang-utan *Pongo pygmaeus*. Not intended to be an aural field guide, this is a pleasant reminder for anyone who has experienced rainforests, and an opportunity to dream for those who have not. Lie back and close your eyes. JULIAN HUGHES

Bird Call Identification: a CD and book on how to identify birds from their song. By Geoff Sample. (HarperCollins, London, 1998. £14.99) An accurate if idiosyncratic mixture of calls and songs of 130 species on CD, accompanied by an honest if slim book, full of doubts and questions. The CD is easy listening with a real-life feeling. Highlights: Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana*, vocabularies of Long-eared *Asio otus* and Short-eared Owl *A. flammeus*, song of Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia*, comparison of calls of Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* and Hedge Accentor *Prunella modularis*, and 'autumn notes' of Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*.

Unfortunately, this guide is neither comprehensive nor definitive. Given time and editing, Geoff Sample will produce a fine guide to bird sounds. This is not it.

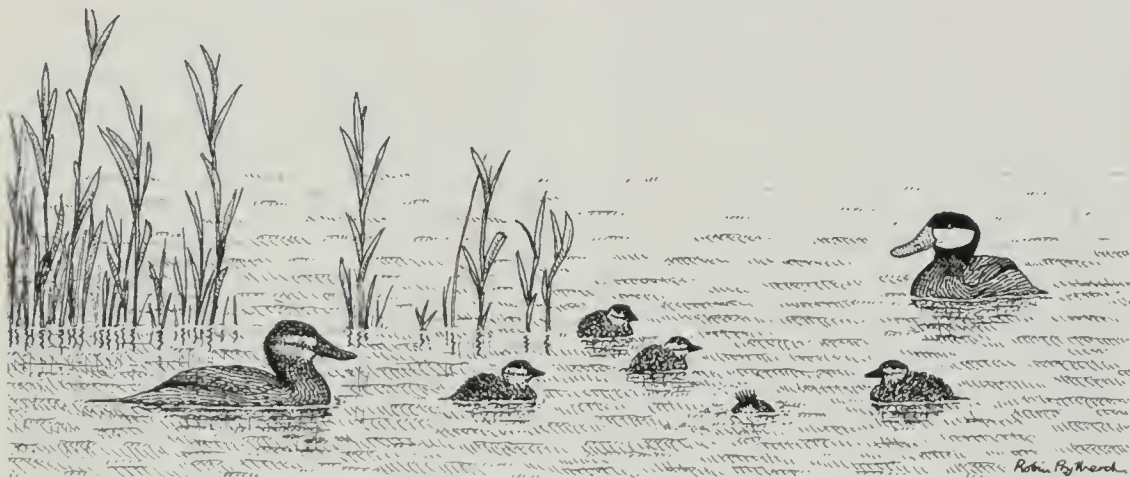
MARK CONSTANTINE

ALSO RECEIVED

Where to Watch Birds in Yorkshire (including the former North Humberside). By John R. Mather. (Christopher Helm Publishers, London, 1998. 2nd edn. 330 pages. ISBN 0-7136-4634-9. Paperback £14.99) (Review: *Brit. Birds* 87: 634)

Ruddy Ducks breeding in the United Kingdom in 1994

Baz Hughes, Mark Underhill and Simon Delany



ABSTRACT A national survey of Ruddy Ducks *Oxyura jamaicensis* in the UK was carried out in 1994 via the Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) network. Of 667 sites visited, 311 held Ruddy Ducks. Most of those breeding were in northern and central England, with 11% in Scotland, new breeding areas in southern England and 11 breeding females in Northern Ireland. Most sites held only one or two pairs, with a maximum of ten at Mickletown Ings, West Yorkshire. Broods were reported from 92 sites (30% of those with Ruddy Ducks). Mean brood size fell from 4.2 ducklings for newly hatched broods to 3.0 ducklings at fledging, somewhat smaller than brood sizes reported from North America. Most broods less than 27 days old were attended only by a female, 14% were accompanied by both a male and a female, and 2% by only a male. The proportion of broods unattended by adults increased from 2% at less than nine days old to 70% for those older than 27 days. Crèches were observed on only three occasions, but individual females were suspected to have reared two broods at six sites. Most breeding sites were relatively small lakes, both man-made and natural, 65% of which had some protected status, and 86% of which suffered human disturbance. The UK population was estimated at

641-780 breeding females, but is likely to be even higher, since a number of breeding sites probably remain unknown. This is supported by crude population-modelling, which, based on a mid-winter population of 3,300 birds, suggests a breeding population of 780-974 females.

Ruddy Ducks *Oxyura jamaicensis* are native to North America and were introduced into captive collections in the UK in the 1930s (Lever 1977). They first escaped from captivity in the UK in 1953 and first bred in the wild at Chew Valley Lake, Avon, in 1960 (King 1976). At first, the population increased at an exponential rate, but during the 1980s this slowed to an increment of about 10% per annum. The current population is estimated at 3,300 wintering birds, with a minimum of 600 breeding pairs (Hughes & Grussu 1994; Hughes *et al.* in press).

In winter, Ruddy Ducks are gregarious, forming large flocks on inland waterbodies, but during the breeding season they disperse widely to breed on small, reed-fringed pools. Nests are constructed over water in emergent vegetation, typically Reed Canary-grass *Phalaris arundinacea*, Bulrush *Typha latifolia*, Common Club-rush *Schoenoplectus lacustris*, or sedge *Carex*. Ruddy Ducks arrive at their breeding sites in March and April, pair formation takes place from the start of April, and the first eggs are laid towards the end of April (Hughes 1992). Unlike most other waterbirds in the UK, the breeding season extends throughout the summer into September or even October (Cramp & Simmons 1977). Clutches are incubated for a relatively short period of 23-25 days and broods hatch from late May (Palmer 1976; Cramp & Simmons 1977). The ducklings are very well-developed on hatching; diving for food from only two days of age, they are well able to survive alone. Indeed, female Ruddy Ducks frequently lay eggs in other waterbirds' nests, and offspring produced in this parasitic manner may represent 7% of total duckling production (Joyner 1983). Broods may be accompanied by males, but this is thought to be caused by attraction to females rather than to the ducklings (e.g. Gray 1980). As ducklings grow, the females become less attentive, and desert their broods at around three weeks of age, leaving the ducklings to fend for themselves until fledging some five weeks later (Gray 1980; Hughes 1992). Some broods may merge into crèches, which in North America can contain up to 100 ducklings (Joyner 1975). Females re-nest readily if their nests are interfered with by predators and can start to re-lay only four days after the loss of a clutch (Tome 1987). Females are known to re-nest at least once per season in the wild, but are physiologically capable of re-nesting up to four times per breeding season in captivity (Murton & Kear 1978). The premature desertion of ducklings has led to speculation that some females may rear more than one brood per season. Although this is known to have occurred in captivity (Palmer 1976), there is only circumstantial evidence of its occurrence in the wild (Palmer 1976; Hughes 1992).

As with most species of waterfowl in the northern hemisphere (Johnson *et al.* 1992), Ruddy Ducks show a male-biased sex-ratio. Shortly after pairing,

paired birds (particularly females) become much less conspicuous as they strive to avoid the unwanted attentions of unpaired males. In contrast, unpaired males are very obvious as they rove around potential breeding sites in search of mates. Females with broods are initially very secretive and remain hidden in lakeshore vegetation. Even with daily hour-long monitoring visits, broods can be overlooked for up to two weeks (B. Hughes pers. obs.), although they do become more obvious as the young become older and more independent.

The only previous information on breeding Ruddy Ducks in the UK was collected during breeding-atlas surveys in 1968-72 and 1988-91 (Sharrock 1976; Gibbons *et al.* 1993). Both provided accurate information on breeding distribution, but, because coverage relied on visiting 10-km or 2-km squares rather than individual waterbodies, they could not provide site-specific abundance data or information on breeding success. This 1994 survey collected quantitative site-by-site information on numbers of Ruddy Ducks present, their breeding success, and the ecological characteristics of breeding sites.

Methods

The breeding survey was carried out in 1994 via the Wetland Birds Survey (WeBS) count network. Two regions poorly surveyed in 1994 (Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire) were resurveyed during 1995. Regional organisers submitted regional nil returns if, based on their own knowledge, they felt that no Ruddy Ducks were present in their regions. As Ruddy Ducks are known to be secretive during the breeding season, survey visits were made in early morning or evening when they are most active. Counters were requested to spend a minimum of 30 minutes at each site on five dates during the summer: 10th April, 15th May, 10th July, 31st July and 21st August 1994. During each visit, the numbers of males, females and ducklings were recorded. Only sites with all five visits were selected for analysis of seasonal changes in sex-ratio and proportion of birds paired. For each brood observed, the number of ducklings and the body size of the ducklings in relation to the size of the female were also recorded in four age/size classes: Class I < $\frac{1}{4}$ size of female; Class II $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ size of female; Class III $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{3}{4}$ size of female; and Class IV > $\frac{3}{4}$ size of female. Finally, counters were asked to record whether broods were accompanied by females, by males or by neither, and whether they were crèched. Additional site-specific information was requested on conservation status (local nature reserve; SSSI; National Nature Reserve/Special Protection Area/Ramsar site; or none); surface area (in hectares); type of waterbody (reservoir; man-made, including gravel-pits; natural lake; or river/canal) and dominant emergent vegetation species (Reed Canary-grass, Bulrush, Common Club-rush, sedge or Common Reed *Phragmites australis*); and the daily amount of human disturbance (none, 0- $\frac{1}{2}$ hour, $\frac{1}{2}$ -2 hours, 2-8 hours, and 8+ hours).

Population estimates

Comprehensive survey work on Anglesey suggested that individual

pre-breeding surveys in April located the majority of males present on the island, but only 71% (52-87%, $n=3$ surveys) of females (Hughes 1996). Mid-summer counts located a much smaller proportion (about 75% of males and 30% of females). There are two possible methods for calculating population estimates of Ruddy Ducks: first, using the above data to calculate correction factors for actual totals of birds counted, and, secondly, using the sum of individual site estimates of the numbers of breeding females present. Counters were, therefore, requested to estimate the actual numbers of females thought to be present at each site. Breeding-population estimates were expressed as numbers of females rather than numbers of pairs, since only 60% of female Ruddy Ducks form pair bonds during the breeding season (Gray 1980; Hughes 1996). Furthermore, females are thought to be relatively site-faithful during the breeding season, whereas males, especially unpaired males, frequently rove from site to site in search of mates. Pre-breeding counts, rather than mid-summer counts, were selected for calculation of population estimates, as they overlooked a much smaller proportion of females present.

Results

Survey coverage

Survey coverage was generally good, with returns received from 95% of the 92 WeBS regions (fig. 1), including 26 regional nil returns, 17 of which were from Scotland. Five regions (Essex, Derbyshire, Shropshire, Lanarkshire and Renfrew) remained inadequately covered. Count data were received from 667 sites, on 311 of which Ruddy Ducks were recorded. The number of sites surveyed on individual visits varied from 187 (31st July) to 236 (15th May), representing 60-76% of the total number of sites on which Ruddy Ducks were recorded. Repeat coverage of individual sites was good, with 77% of sites having more than one visit, and 73% three or more. Only 44% of sites, however, received all five visits.

Status and distribution

TOTAL NUMBER

Ruddy Ducks were recorded in 65% of WeBS regions in the UK, including all regions in England except Cornwall, the Isle of Wight, Somerset and Suffolk. None was recorded in the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man. Anglesey held most sites, followed by Cheshire, West Yorkshire, Greater Manchester and South Yorkshire. In Scotland, Ruddy Ducks were recorded in ten of the 27 WeBS regions on a total of 27 sites, including six in Fife and six in Perth & Kinross. In Wales, five sites from ten WeBS regions held Ruddy Ducks, while in Northern Ireland they were present in three out of six regions at six different sites. The greatest number of full-grown Ruddy Ducks was recorded during the April and August visits (table 1).



Fig. 1. Survey coverage by WeBS region during the 1994 UK Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis* breeding survey.

Table 1. Total numbers of Ruddy Ducks *Oxyura jamaicensis* counted during the 1994 UK breeding survey. Ducklings not included, but note that some full-grown juveniles may be included in the late-summer total of females.

Visit date	No. of sites	No. of ♂♂	No. of ♀♀	No. unsexed	Total	Mean no. of individuals per site
10 April	216	587	363	259	1,209	5.6 (±0.71)
15 May	236	488	259	127	874	3.7 (±0.31)
10 July	227	438	200	100	738	3.3 (±0.28)
31 July	187	388	191	98	677	3.6 (±0.43)
21 August	228	681	347	174	1,248	5.3 (±0.95)

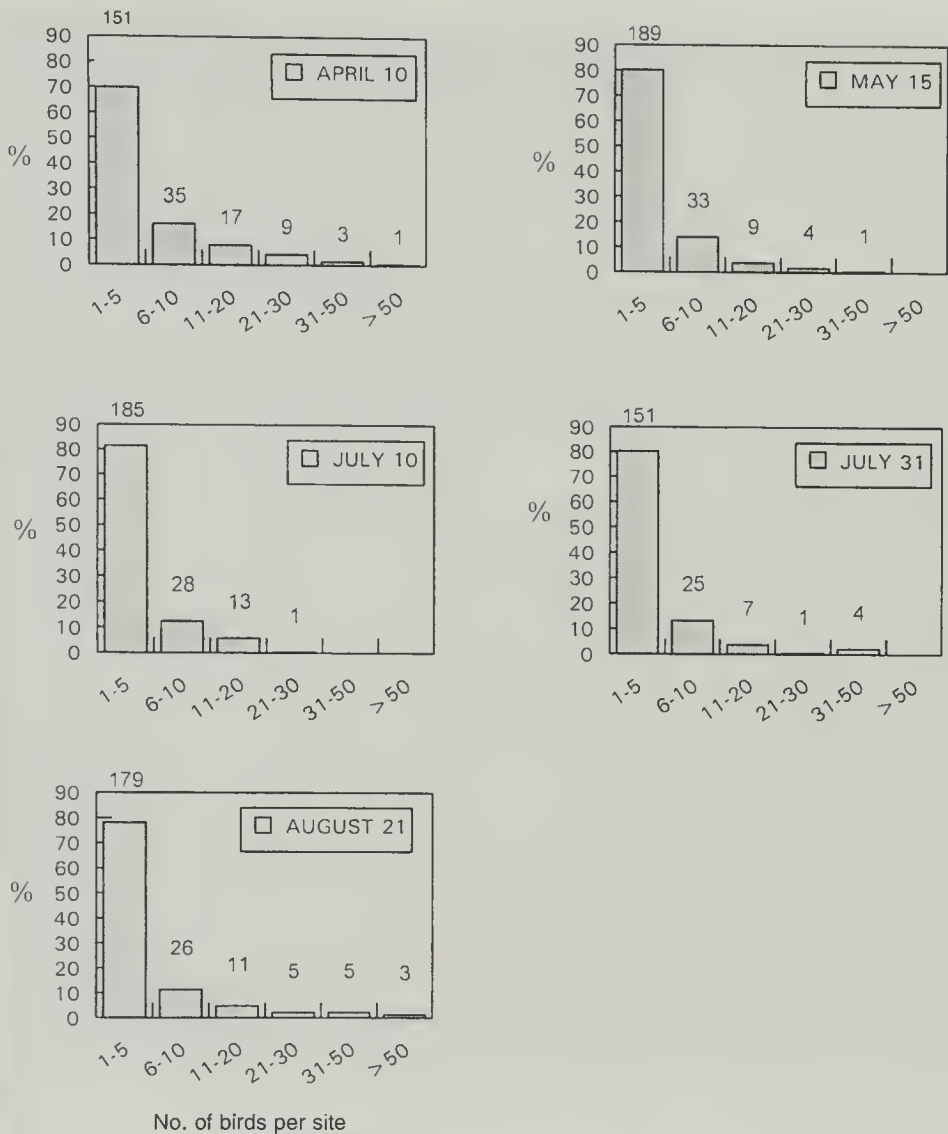


Fig. 2. Frequency distributions of the number of Ruddy Ducks *Oxyura jamaicensis* per site during the 1994 UK breeding survey. Data labels are numbers of sites.

Most sites held small numbers during all five surveys, with 70-81% of sites holding < 5 individuals and 84-94% holding < 10 (fig. 2). Even allowing for uneven coverage, there were still more per site in April and August (table 1). As the median number per site was two for all visits, this was the result of a small number of large counts. Fifteen sites held more than 25 individuals at some time during the summer (table 2). In April, Blithfield Reservoir (Staffordshire) held 116 (10% of the total counted), while the top ten sites held 33% of the total counted. Other important April sites were Abberton Reservoir (Essex), Farmwood Pool (Cheshire), Aqualate Mere (Staffordshire), and Llyn Penrhyn (Anglesey). Chew Valley Lake, not counted in April, probably also held a large number. Adults were more concentrated on major sites in August, with the top ten sites holding 48%. The most important August sites were Fairburn Ings (North Yorkshire), Blithfield Reservoir and Chew Valley Lake. All sites holding large April and/or August concentrations were important wintering and/or breeding sites. No sites held large numbers during May to July.

Table 2. Sites holding more than 25 Ruddy Ducks *Oxyura jamaicensis* (excluding ducklings) during the 1994 UK breeding survey in relation to peak winter numbers (October 1994 to March 1995).

Sites in bold held > 3 breeding females. NC = not counted.

¹ Ranked importance of wintering sites, based on five-year means from WeBS data.

² No data available from *Avon Bird Report*: data withheld in protest against Ruddy Duck control.

Site	County	SURVEY DATE					Peak	Winter peak (Rank) ¹
		10 April	15 May	10 July	31 July	21 Aug		
1. Fairburn Ings	N. Yorks.	27	22	14	40	119	119	144 (9)
2. Blithfield Res.	Staffs.	116	6	12	16	115	116	602 (1)
3. Chew Valley Lake ²	Avon	NC	NC	NC	NC	97	97	362 (2)
4. Holme Pierrepont	Notts.	29	NC	NC	NC	45	45	64 (22)
5. Lound Gravel Pits	Notts.	19	9	6	23	45	45	7
6. Abberton Res.	Essex	38	32	28	31	43	43	77 (18)
7. Clumber Park	Notts.	29	28	19	NC	43	43	118 (12)
8. Llyn Penrhyn	Anglesey	30	10	16	36	39	39	103 (14)
9. Farmwood Pool	Cheshire	35	0	0	6	28	35	123 (11)
10. Aqualate Mere	Staffs.	34	20	1	NC	4	34	17
11. Betley Mere	Staffs.	5	9	17	32	22	32	NC
12. Hilfield Park Res.	Herts.	28	5	1	3	7	28	96 (15)
13. Hanningfield Res.	Essex	27	17	18	NC	18	27	207 (6)
14. New Swillington Ings	W. Yorks.	27	NC	0	0	2	27	238 (5)
15. Kilconquhar Loch	Fife	8	8	10	13	26	26	58 (23)

NUMBERS OF BREEDING FEMALES

Female Ruddy Ducks were consistently present from May to August in 60% of WeBS regions in the UK. Ruddy Ducks occurred, but were thought not to have attempted to breed, in five regions: Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, South Cumbria, Kent and Norfolk, probably representing areas soon to be colonised. The top ten WeBS regions held 38% of all breeding females, Anglesey holding most, followed by Cheshire, West Yorkshire, South Yorkshire and Staffordshire (table 3).

Table 3. WeBS regions holding most female Ruddy Ducks *Oxyura jamaicensis* during the 1994 breeding survey.

¹ Total includes all sites with breeding females, not just those in the table.

WeBS Region	Estimated no. of ♀♀	No. of sites with Ruddy Ducks	No. of sites with attempted breeding	Mean no. of breeding ♀♀ per site
1. Anglesey	60	29	23	2.6
2. Cheshire	42	25	19	2.2
3. West Yorkshire	32	18	16	2.0
4. South Yorkshire	31	17	15	2.1
5. Staffordshire	31	13	10	3.1
6. Greater Manchester	21	17	11	1.9
7. Nottinghamshire	20	15	9	2.2
8. Derbyshire	15	10	9	1.7
9. Leicestershire	13	10	9	1.4
10. West Midlands	16	10	9	1.8
TOTAL ¹	512	311	240	2.1



▲▼ 96 & 97. Male Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis*, April 1996 (above), and female with brood and nearby male, June 1995 (below), all at Slimbridge, Gloucestershire (Mark Hulme)



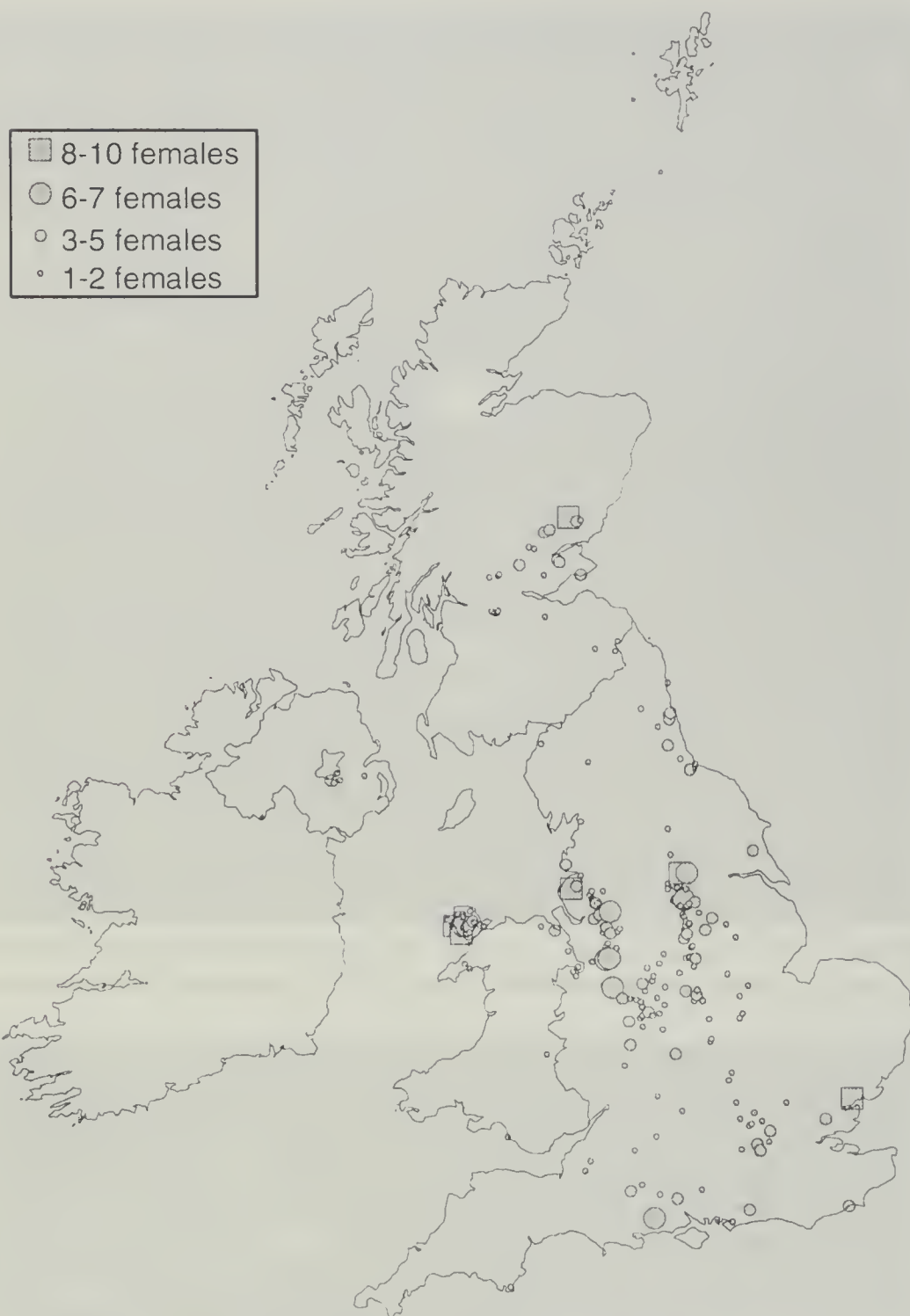


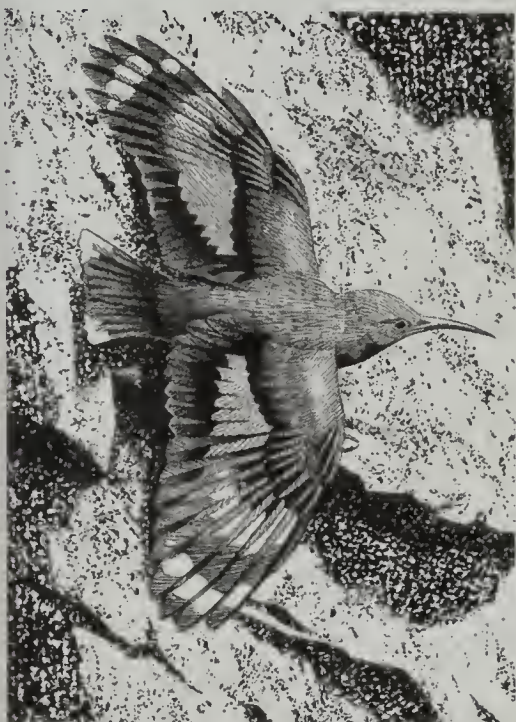
Fig. 3. Distribution of female Ruddy Ducks *Oxyura jamaicensis* during the 1994 UK breeding survey.

An estimated 23% of sites where Ruddy Ducks were seen were considered not to be breeding locations as there were no regular sightings of females during the summer and no observations of ducklings. The remaining 240 sites held an estimated 512 breeding female Ruddy Ducks, 58 of which (11%) were in Scotland and 11 (2%) in Ireland. Most were found in the English Midlands northwards up both sides of the Pennines, on the west as far north as Cumbria and on the east to North Yorkshire (fig. 3). A small number of sites extended

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up the east coast of England to southeast Scotland. North and southwest Scotland, Wales (excluding Anglesey), East Anglia and southwest England were notably devoid of breeding sites, but there were a number of newly colonised sites in southern England.

Individual breeding sites held a mean of 2.1 females, ranging from one to ten (table 3, fig. 4). About half of the 240 breeding sites held only one female, while a further 23% held two. Thus, most breeding Ruddy Ducks were thinly dispersed over a relatively large number of sites. Fifteen sites held more than

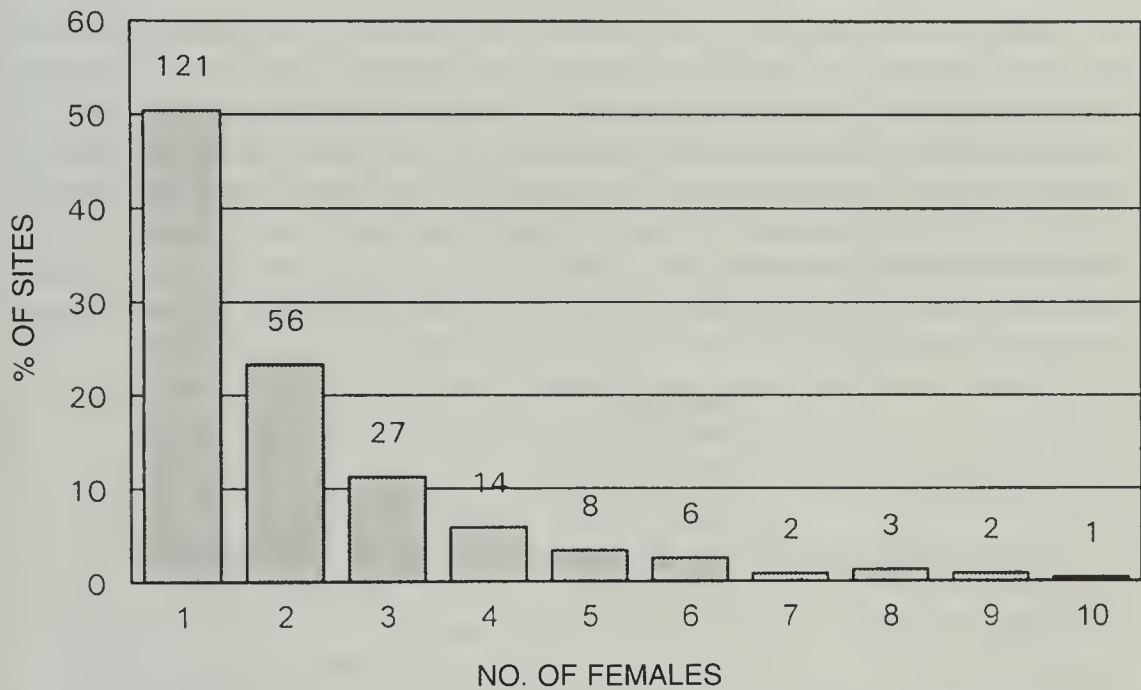


Fig. 4. Frequency distributions of the number of breeding female Ruddy Ducks *Oxyura jamaicensis* per site during the 1994 UK breeding survey. Data labels are numbers of sites.

Table 4. Sites supporting more than five female Ruddy Ducks *Oxyura jamaicensis* during the 1994 UK breeding survey.

Site	County	No. of females
1. Mickletown Ings	West Yorkshire	10
2. Abberton Reservoir	Essex	9
3. Llyn Penrhyn	Anglesey	9
4. Llyn Coron	Anglesey	8
5. Loch of Kinnordy	Angus	8
6. Scarisbrick Hall	Lancashire	8
7. Aqualate Mere	Staffordshire	7
8. Fairburn Ings	North Yorkshire	7
9. Betley Mere	Staffordshire	6
10. Blashford Lakes	Hampshire	6
11. Brent Reservoir	Greater London	6
12. Doddington Pool	Cheshire	6
13. Llyn Llywenan	Anglesey	6
14. Shell Carrington NR	Greater Manchester	6
15. Wath Ings	South Yorkshire	6

five females, the most important being Mickletown Ings (West Yorkshire), Abberton Reservoir (Essex), Llyn Penrhyn, Llyn Coron (Anglesey) and Loch of Kinnordy (Angus) (table 4). Although sites with most breeding females were generally located in the main breeding areas, notable exceptions were Abberton Reservoir, Loch of Kinnordy, Scarisbrick Hall (Lancashire), Blashford Lakes (Hampshire) and Brent Reservoir (Greater London).

Social structure

The number of Ruddy Ducks counted on the sub-set of 138 sites with all five visits was highest in April, fell during midsummer, then rose to almost pre-breeding levels by mid August (fig. 5). The pre-breeding sex-ratio was 1.5 males per female, increasing to 1.9-2.2 for the remainder of the summer as females became more secretive than males during breeding. The seasonal variation in the percentage of paired females mirrored that of males (fig. 6) being initially low, increasing to a peak of 37% of males and 72% of females on the May visit, then declining steadily to 10% of males and 21% of females by August.

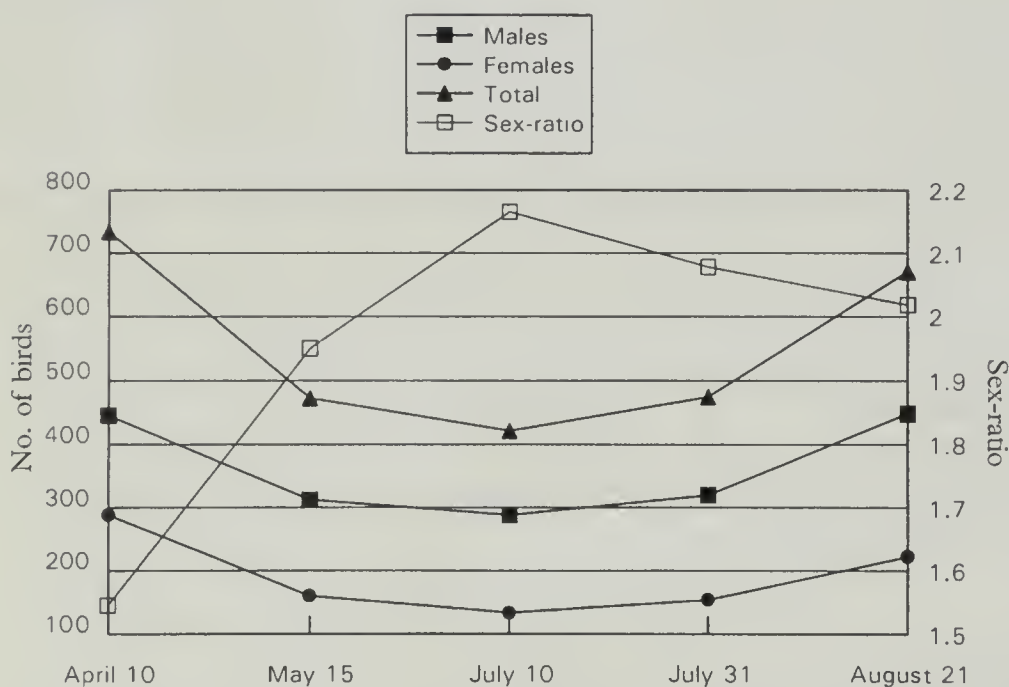


Fig. 5. Seasonal variation in sex-ratio and numbers of Ruddy Ducks *Oxyura jamaicensis* counted on sites with all five visits during the 1994 UK breeding survey.

Population estimate

ESTIMATED NUMBER OF FEMALES PER SITE

The total number of breeding female Ruddy Ducks, calculated as the sum of individual site estimates, was 512 (see above). This figure must then be corrected for those present in regions with poor coverage. By far the most important of these was Shropshire, which is estimated to have 40 Ruddy Duck breeding sites (A. Hearle *in litt.*). Assuming a mean of 2.1 females per site (see above), Shropshire would hold 84 female Ruddy Ducks, rating it the most

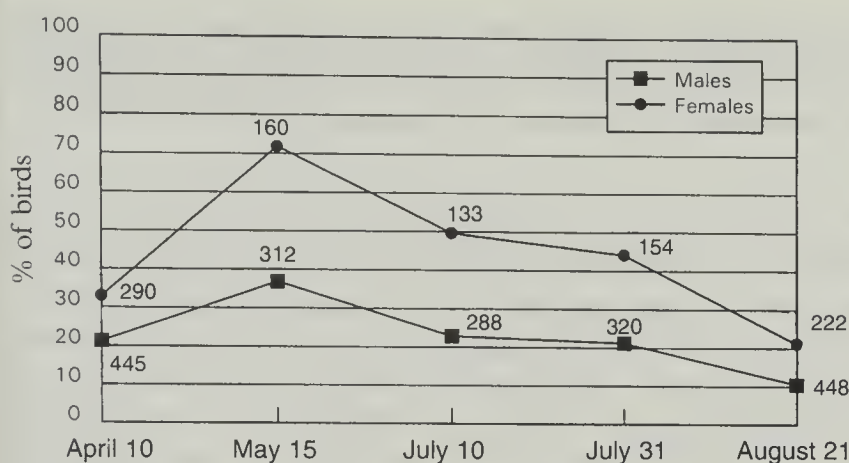


Fig. 6. Seasonal variation in the percentage of paired male and female Ruddy Ducks *Oxyura jamaicensis*. Data labels are sample sizes.

important region in the country. Ruddy Ducks were recorded on 24 sites in Derbyshire in 1994, with breeding confirmed at eight, involving 13 broods (James 1995). Fourteen of these sites (three of which had confirmed breeding records) were not counted during this survey, although the five major sites were covered. Assuming a mean of 2.1 females per site, the 14 unsurveyed sites would have held 29 breeding females, resulting in an amended regional estimate of 44 females, second only to Shropshire and Anglesey. Bond *et al.* (1995) indicated that Ruddy Ducks bred on five sites in Essex in 1994 for which this survey had no records. A minimum of 11 females summered at these sites (rearing at least three broods), giving a revised county estimate of 25 females. In Lanarkshire and Renfrew, this survey received returns from four sites holding five females with seven young in two broods. Murray (1995) stated that Ruddy Ducks were present at eight sites in these two regions, rearing a total of ten young from six broods. Assuming that the four sites covered during this survey were included in these eight sites and that a mean of 2.1 females was present on the four unsurveyed sites, this represents an additional eight females (a figure in line with the reported production in 1993 of six broods) and a revised regional estimate of 13 females. In total, therefore, an additional 129 breeding female Ruddy Ducks (81 in Shropshire, 29 in Derbyshire, 11 in Essex, and eight in Scotland) may have been present on 60 sites not covered by this survey. Adding this to the earlier figure of 512 females gives a final population estimate of 641 females¹.

Pre-breeding survey

The April survey located a total of 1,209 Ruddy Ducks (587 males, 363 females and 259 unsexed individuals, or 747 males and 462 females, assuming that the sex-ratio of unsexed birds was equal to that of sexed birds). If the pre-breeding survey located a similar proportion of females present as

¹ It should be noted that further information on sites overlooked in regions deemed to have adequate coverage during the survey may have been available from county bird reports. This information was, however, not collected as part of this exercise and the population estimates produced are, therefore, recognised as minima.

pre-breeding surveys on Anglesey (Hughes 1996), this equates to a population of 651 females on surveyed sites. Adding the 129 females from unsurveyed sites produces a final population estimate of 780 females.

Breeding success

Broods of Ruddy Ducks were first recorded on 31st May. The number of broods and ducklings counted then increased as the season progressed (table 5). Although broods were located on a maximum of only 52 sites on any one visit, a total of 79 different sites held broods. Broods were reported on non-count days from another 13 sites, giving a total of 92 sites with broods, representing 30% of sites with Ruddy Ducks and 38% of sites at which breeding was suspected. Broods were observed on only one visit at 28% of sites. The highest number of ducklings recorded on any one visit was 305 in 82 broods on the last visit, in August (table 5). An estimated 178 broods of 703 ducklings were, however, reported in total. Most sites (61%) held only one brood, with a maximum of six recorded on three sites.

Table 5. Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis* broods and ducklings counted during the 1994 UK breeding survey.

¹ Although the count date was set as 15th May, the site holding these two broods was actually visited on 31st May.

Visit date	No. of sites	Observed no. of sites with broods	No. of broods	No. of ducklings	Cumulative no. of sites with broods
10 April	216	0	0	0	0
15 May ¹	236	2	2	6	1
10 July	227	34	48	196	34
31 July	187	36	47	196	56
21 August	228	52	82	305	79

Ducklings were aged and brood sizes registered on 177 occasions at 74 sites. A total of 63 Class I broods was observed, two on the 15th May visit, 23 on 10th July, 21 on 31st July and 17 on 21st August, suggesting that broods hatched throughout the summer. Mean brood size of small (Class I) ducklings was 4.2 ± 0.3 ducklings ($n = 63$, range 1-10), falling to 3.8 ± 0.3 ducklings ($n = 45$, range 1-8) for Class II, 3.8 ± 0.4 ducklings ($n = 23$, range 1-7) for Class III, and to 3.0 ± 0.3 ducklings ($n = 46$, range 1-7) for the largest (Class IV).

Most broods of small to medium-sized ducklings (Class I-III broods) were attended by a female only, although both a male and a female were present with 14% of broods and males only with 2% (table 6). As broods became older, the proportion unattended increased from 2% for Class I broods to 70% for Class IV broods. Crèches were observed on three occasions, one from two broods of six and four ducklings (both Class IV), another from two broods of five ducklings each (also both Class IV), and a third from two broods of three ducklings, one Class II, the other Class IV. In the first two cases, broods in the crèche were thought to have been produced by different females, while the third comprised different-aged broods from the same female. Such double-brooding was suspected on six sites: Rye Harbour Nature Reserve (East

Sussex), Brent Reservoir, Chasewater (Staffordshire), Carr Vale and Netherthorpe Flash (both Derbyshire), and Hauxley Nature Reserve (Northumberland).

Table 6. Number of Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis* broods of different ages attended or unaccompanied during the 1994 breeding survey (percentages in parentheses).

Attended by:	Age/size Class				Total
	I	II	III	IV	
Male only	1 (2%)	1 (2%)	1 (4%)	0	3 (2%)
Female only	48 (76%)	33 (73%)	16 (70%)	12 (26%)	109 (62%)
Male and female	13 (21%)	7 (16%)	3 (13%)	2 (4%)	25 (14%)
Unattended	1 (2%)	4 (9%)	3 (13%)	32 (70%)	40 (23%)
TOTAL	63	45	23	46	177

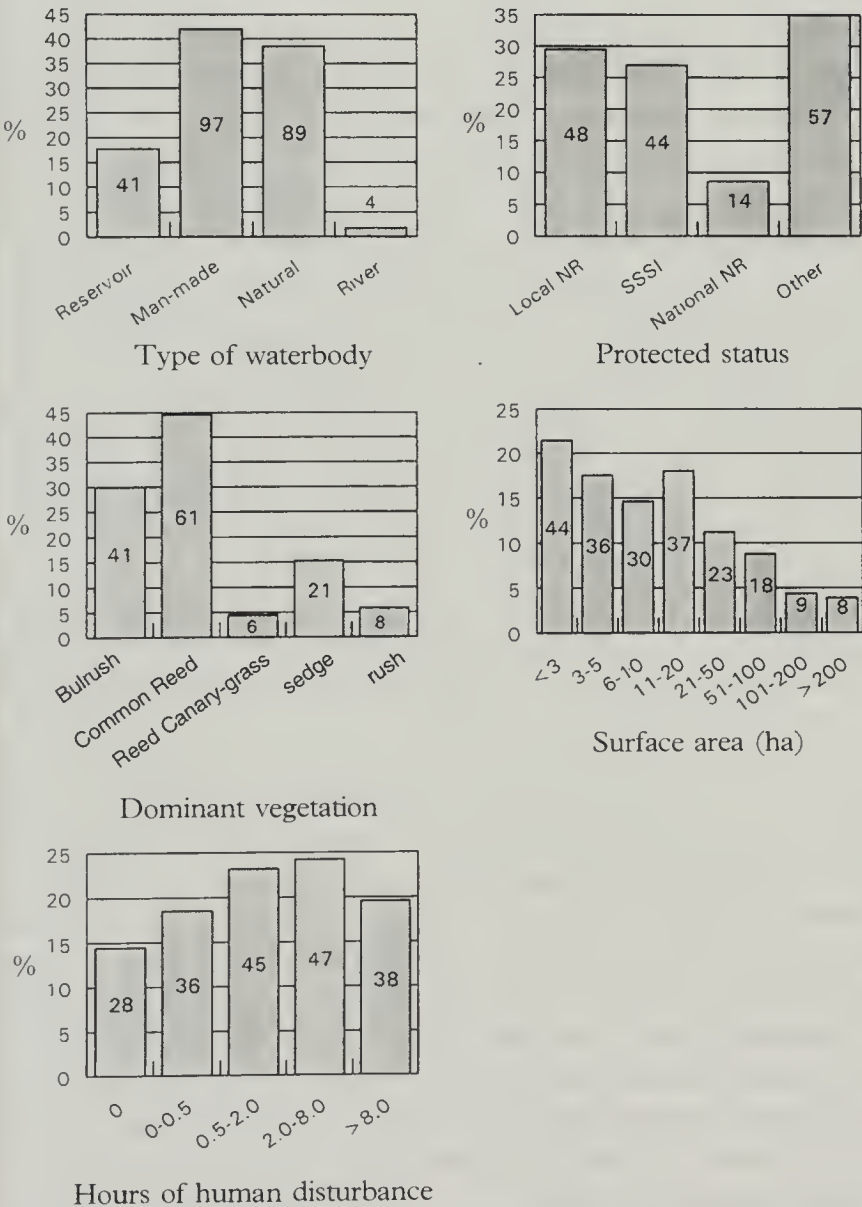


Fig. 7. Site characteristics of waterbodies with Ruddy Ducks *Oxyura jamaicensis* present during the 1994 UK breeding survey. Data labels are numbers of sites.

Habitat characteristics of breeding sites

Most Ruddy Duck breeding sites were relatively small, man-made or natural lakes (fig. 7). Ruddy Ducks appeared tolerant of all levels of human disturbance, with 86% of sites experiencing some human disturbance and 19% more than eight hours per day. The dominant vegetation on most sites was Common Reed, followed by Bulrush and sedge. A large proportion of sites had some protected status: 29% were local nature reserves (without SSSI status), 27% were SSSIs and 9% were National Nature Reserves, SPAs or Ramsar sites. The remaining 35% were either publicly or privately owned sites with no reported protected status.

Discussion

Status and distribution

The 1968-72 breeding atlas reported only 20 10-km squares with Ruddy Ducks present, mostly in the English West Midlands (Sharrock 1976), while the 1988-91 atlas survey located them throughout England, and into Scotland, Wales and Ireland (Gibbons *et al.* 1993) (fig. 8). Indeed, the Ruddy Duck showed the third most substantial increase in breeding range between the two atlases (1,437%), surpassed only by Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti* and another introduced species, Rose-ringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri*. This survey revealed further northward expansion of the Ruddy Duck's breeding range, with major concentrations now established in northern England and southern Scotland. This range extension may now have extended to Iceland, where there have been annual records of Ruddy Ducks since 1984 and breeding records since 1990 (Nielsen 1995). These Icelandic-breeding Ruddy Ducks most likely originate from the UK, as their arrival in Iceland in May is preceded by annual spring records on Orkney and Shetland.

Rapid colonisation of the UK by Ruddy Ducks is thought to be due to the species exploiting a largely vacant niche, that of a nocturnal-feeding, mainly insectivorous waterbird which nests in emergent vegetation over water (Hughes 1992). The Ruddy Duck's breeding strategy also results in potentially high annual productivity. Ruddy Ducks are reproductively active for much longer than other waterfowl, thus allowing females to renest or even to rear two broods per year. Renesting appeared to be common on Anglesey, where on five sites the number of nesting attempts was twice the number of females present (Hughes 1996). Double-brooding may also be more common than previously thought, with six reports during this survey. Finally, a high proportion of females may breed in their first year. One-year-old Ruddy Ducks have bred successfully both in captivity (N. S. Jarrett *in litt.*) and in the wild (Alisauskas & Ankney 1994). The Anglesey study, with twice as many nesting attempts as females present, may also suggest that all females bred, although the possibility cannot be ruled out that some birds may have bred three times or more and others not at all.

This survey provided no evidence for formation of non-breeding flocks by Ruddy Ducks. Post-breeding flocks formed in August on important wintering

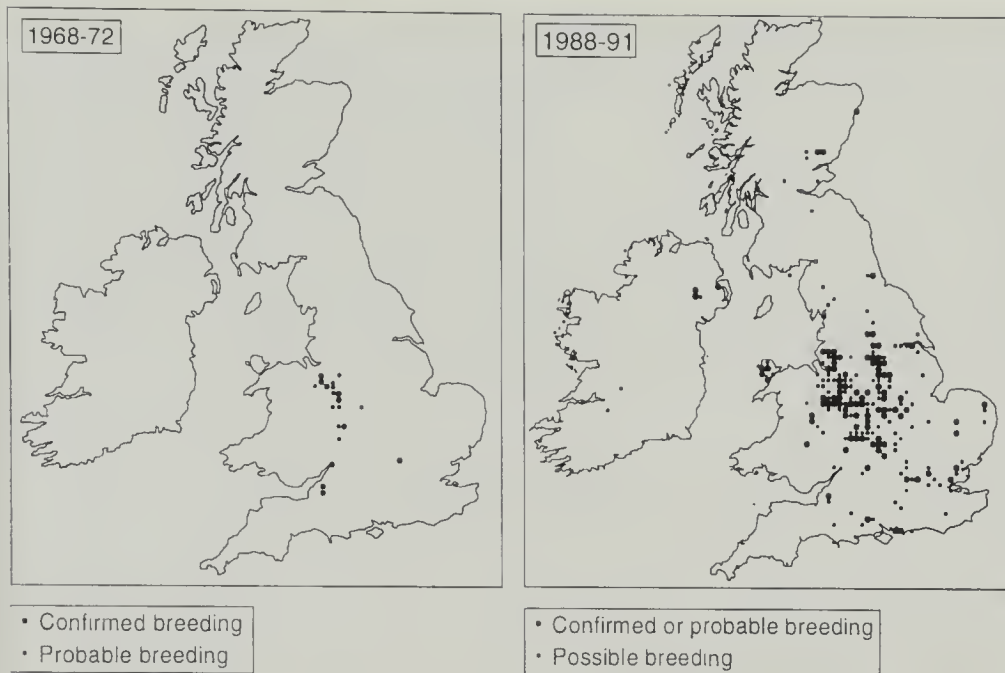


Fig. 8. Distribution (by 10-km grid square) of breeding Ruddy Ducks *Oxyura jamaicensis* in Britain and Ireland (after Sharrock 1976; Gibbons *et al.* 1993).

sites, but it is unclear whether these represented pre-moult or post-moult concentrations. Ruddy Ducks in captivity undergo a complete post-breeding moult lasting two weeks, beginning during 2nd-30th August (B. Hughes pers. obs.), suggesting that these birds may have been gathering to moult. It is also possible, however, that they were non-breeders or failed breeders which had already moulted. As Ruddy Ducks are highly aquatic, the only major predators of full-grown birds are gulls (Mistereck 1974; Joyner 1977a). Formation of moult concentrations would appear to offer little benefit to Ruddy Ducks, since this would simply serve to attract aerial predators (Fox *et al.* 1994) and increase competition for food resources. It may be more likely, therefore, that Ruddy Ducks replace their flight feathers prior to autumn migration in order to benefit from the associated increase in flight efficiency, especially given their relatively high wing-loading (mass:wing-surface area).

Breeding success

A minimum of 63 different broods hatched from an estimated breeding population of 512 females, suggesting that a minimum of 12% of females bred successfully. North American waterfowl have observed brood/pair ratios (number of broods/number of pairs) of about 0.4, ranging from 0.22 for Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis* to 0.76 in one study of Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* (Johnson *et al.* 1992). The brood/pair ratio (or rather brood/female ratio) during the current survey was therefore much lower than those reported for other waterfowl. This is, however, probably a result of the secretive behaviour of Ruddy Duck broods, since detailed studies on Anglesey produced higher brood/female ratios of 0.50 in 1993 and 0.26 in 1994 ($n = 22$ females and $n = 23$ females, respectively) (Hughes 1996).

As Ruddy Ducks are fully grown at six weeks of age (Siegfried 1973), the

four size classes used during this study are broadly equivalent to nine-day periods. In a synthesis of North American studies, Bellrose (1976) reported a mean brood size of 5.69 ducklings ($n = 962$ broods) for 1-day-old to 18-day-old broods, 4.96 ducklings ($n = 562$) for 19-day-old to 42-day-old broods, and 4.43 ducklings ($n = 164$) for broods over 42 days old. Brood size in Utah was even higher, at eight ducklings in 126 one-week-old broods, declining to six by three weeks of age (Joyner 1977b). The mean brood sizes recorded during this survey (4.2 ducklings at hatching, falling to 3.0 at fledging) are therefore smaller than those in North America. Brood sizes on Anglesey in 1993 and 1994 were also small, with a mean for newly hatched broods of 4.0 ($n = 19$ broods) and 3.8 ducklings ($n = 17$ broods), respectively, falling to 2.9 and 2.6 young at fledging. It is tempting to suggest that this lower productivity is a result of the inbred nature of the British Ruddy Duck population, which was established by only seven individuals (four males and three females) imported to Slimbridge in the late 1940s (Hughes 1992). Preliminary DNA-fingerprinting studies of Ruddy Ducks have already confirmed that British birds are highly inbred compared with those in North America (E. Signer *in litt.*).

Population estimate

This survey suggested a UK Ruddy Duck breeding population of 641-780 females. Even the larger figure is, however, probably still an underestimate, since some breeding sites will undoubtedly have been overlooked. Calculations based on a winter population of 3,300 individuals (from Waters *et al.* 1996, assuming a 90% WeBS count efficiency, after Owen *et al.* 1986), a population sex-ratio of 1.13 (Hughes 1996), a nest success of 70% (Hughes 1996), a fledging success of three chicks per female (see above), a first-year mortality of 40% and an adult mortality of 20%, both typical for diving ducks (Johnson *et al.* 1992), suggest a breeding population of 780-974 females depending on whether no or all mortality takes place by midwinter. These calculations, albeit crude, suggest that current population estimates from survey data represent minima.

Acknowledgments

We should like to thank all the WeBS regional organisers and counters, who did an excellent job in achieving such good coverage throughout the UK. Thanks to Mark Pollitt for coding site forms and providing additional data, and to Pete Cranswick for dropping everything on a number of occasions to help. Rachael George did a sterling job inputting survey data to tight deadlines, and John Bowler improved an earlier draft of this paper. This work was carried out under contract to the Department of the Environment and is published with the Department's agreement.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Birding for 'BB' subscribers

Subscribers can claim a 10% reduction on the following overseas birdwatching trips in 1999 with the bird-tour company, 'Sunbird'.

18th January to 5th February ZIMBABWE AND NAMIBIA with Ian Sinclair & Séan McMinn, for 80 or more of southern Africa's 140 endemics, a wealth of intra-African and Palearctic migrants, and many large mammals in Etosha National Park.

27th February to 13th March SRI LANKA with Steve Rooke & Deepal Warakagoda, for over 20 endemics (all seen on Sunbird's last tour), large numbers of northern migrants which winter on the island, many other resident species which are difficult or impossible to see on the usual birdwatching circuits of northern India, and a rich cultural heritage.

21st March to 4th April ISRAEL with Séan McMinn, for Western Palearctic spring migration at its best. The first week will be spent travelling around northern Israel in search of Middle Eastern specialities such as Black Francolin *Francolinus francolinus*, Clamorous Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus stentoreus* and Syrian Serin *Serinus syriacus*. The second week will be based in Eilat, justifiably famous for its falls of migrants and passage of north-bound raptors.

4th-21st April BHUTAN with Paul Holt. Explore this almost mythical Himalayan kingdom, with its vast untouched forests harbouring many species difficult to see elsewhere on Earth. Highlights are likely to include Rufous-necked Hornbill *Aceros nipalensis*, Ward's Trogon *Harpactes wardi* and Great Parrotbill *Conostoma oemodium*.

8th-22nd May POINT PELEE with Séan McMinn. The classic spring migration point where North American wood-warblers drip from the trees during fall conditions. The tour also includes a trip into Michigan to look for the endangered Kirtland's Warbler *Dendroica kirtlandii*.

13th-23rd May POLAND with Richard Bashford & Gregory Lesniewski. A step back in time to traditional agricultural landscapes where Corn Crakes *Crex crex* still thrive, primeval forests filled with woodpeckers including White-backed *Dendrocopos leucotos* and Three-toed *Picoides tridactylus*, and vast marshes where Great Snipes *Gallinago media* lek and Aquatic Warblers *Acrocephalus paludicola* sing.

30th April to 7th May CANARY ISLANDS with Tony Clarke, for the famous endemics, including Laurel Pigeon *Columba junoniae*, Canary Islands Stonechat *Saxicola dacotiae* and Blue Chaffinch *Fringilla teydea*, as well as seabirds such as Little Shearwater *Puffinus assimilis* and Bulwer's Petrel *Bulweria bulwerii*.

These trips have been planned jointly with the top bird-tour company, SUNBIRD. *British Birds* subscribers may claim a 10% reduction on the normal price of these trips. For more details please contact Sunbird, PO Box 76, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 1DF; phone 01767 682969; fax 01767 692481; e-mail: sunbird@sunbird.demon.co.uk

Volunteer ringers for Doñana

Expert ringers and assistant ringers are needed to help in ringing programmes to study trans-Saharan night migrants in Doñana National Park, Spain, during 1st September to 15th November 1998. A stay of at least one week is expected. Local schoolchildren will watch the ringing procedures, which will be from dawn to dusk. A rota should allow some days off, when volunteers will be encouraged to join other research teams in the Doñana area.

For details, contact José Luis Arroyo Matos (Reserva Biologica de Doñana), Ctra. de Matalascañas s/n, Apartado de correos N° 4, 21760 Matalascañas, Almonte (Huelva); telephone: +34-959-440032; fax: +34-959-440033; e-mail: [joseluis@cbd.csic.es](mailto:josluis@cbd.csic.es)



NEWS AND COMMENT

Compiled by Wendy Dickson and Bob Scott

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

Cuts in BTO research programme

Some four years ago, we commented on the fact that the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) was cutting its annual grant to the BTO (*Brit. Birds* 87: 574). We were soon taken to task (*Brit. Birds* 88: 50) when it was pointed out that there had been no real cut, only a reduction in 'planned funding'. We now hear that the planned funding for the BTO (from JNCC sources) in 1998/99 will be reduced by 15% from that in 1997/98.

The route by which Government money reaches the BTO is long and tortuous. This stems largely from the era when the Nature Conservancy Council was dismembered by Nicholas Ridley and the country agencies of English Nature, Scottish Natural Heritage and the Countryside Council for Wales were established. JNCC funding is very dependent upon the annual contributions from the country agencies, which in turn are very dependent upon funding from the Department of Environment, Transport and Regions (DETR), which requires resources from the Treasury. Confused? Over the years, the British Government, of whatever political persuasion, has signed up to large numbers of international conventions and treaties and has made the 'right' conservation and environmental noises. To comply with its commitments, the Government requires knowledge and scientific facts. In many cases, the only source of this knowledge is the BTO's massive data base assembled from the dedicated work of a huge network of amateur birders throughout the country. To pay individuals to gather the information would cost tens of millions of pounds.

What is the result of the Government's short-sighted approach? Fortunately, in the last four years, the BTO has very wisely and successfully diversified its financial sources and is now less dependent upon the JNCC funds. There will inevitably, however, be a problem, and it is looking as if there will be less analysis of the Nest Record Scheme, an increase in the cost of bird rings and, perhaps more significantly, serious reductions in environment-change and habitat studies. Most worrying of all, there will be a cut-back in the 'alert system' that warns Government and non-government bodies of significant changes in bird populations.

Governments cannot continue to boast of their environmental credentials and not provide the wherewithal to do the work.

Claudia Wilds honoured

The American Birding Association has awarded its Ludlow Griscom Distinguished Birder Award posthumously to the late Claudia Wilds, who died in June 1997 (*Brit. Birds* 90: 399).

Don't miss the Fair!

The British Birdwatching Fair is at Rutland Water during 21st-23rd August 1998. It is *the* place to meet people: friends, publishers, artists, authors, birders, birdwatchers, bird-lovers, *everyone*. If you've never been to it, go; if you've been already, you'll doubtless be going again.

The Bird Illustrator of the Year drawings will be on display in the Art Marquee, and Bird Photograph of the Year prints will also be on view. Have a look.

BB's stand is no. 31 in marquee 2. Do call in and say 'Hello' to us.

BIY judging

Every year, the judges of Bird Illustrator of the Year get together at Fountains for the enjoyable task of assessing the current year's entries. Never before photographed together, this year they were captured (plate 98): the two instigators of BIY, back in 1978 (RG & TS); the current President and two Past Presidents of the Society of Wildlife Artists (BP, RG & KS); and two winners of the title Bird Illustrator of the Year, in 1982 and 1984 (AH & BP).

Blinded by science

Plans have been announced for huge mirrors to be put into orbit around the Earth to reflect sunlight onto cities at night and, thereby, save the costs of street lighting. The scheme is especially appealing to the governments of countries at high latitudes, where the winter nights are long.

The only criticism that we have heard of this to date has come from astronomers, who have pleaded the case for their amateurs, who would no longer be able to see the stars at night.

Nor would the rest of us. Nor would migrating birds. And what effect would it have on nocturnal predators, such as owls, that rely on surprise? And on their nocturnal-feeding prey species, which rely on darkness for protection?

The consortium planning this lunacy (a term we use deliberately) obviously has its eyes blinded by its desire for financial gain. It would not be metaphorical blinding for the wildlife.

BPY extra

Several of the stunning bird photographs short-listed in this year's Bird Photograph of the Year competition will, as in past years, be featured, along with the winner, in the monthly magazine *Bird Watching*. We are delighted that this additional coverage is provided by *Bird Watching*. Look out for the September issue in your local newsagent or bookstore.



▲ 98. BIRD ILLUSTRATOR OF THE YEAR judges: left to right, Bruce Pearson, Alan Harris, Robert Gillmor, Keith Shackleton and Dr Tim Sharrock, at Fountains, April 1998 (J. T. R. Sharrock)

Kidnapped birders freed

Four American Birding Association members are now free, after having been kidnapped and held hostage in Colombia by FARC (the Forces of Armed Revolution of Colombia). The guerilla group abducted them at a roadblock less than 60 km south of Bogotá. One of the party, Tom Fiore, escaped after being held for over a week, and the other three (Louise Augustine, Todd Mark and Peter Shen) were released, after being held captive, threatened with death and handcuffed at night for nearly five weeks.

The best advice that we can offer to the travelling birder is always to tell someone reliable where you are planning to go; to avoid known trouble spots; to heed local up-to-date advice; to carry a field guide with bird pictures; and, if the worst happens, to remain calm. While jokes may be inappropriate and may be misinterpreted, a smile can often help to defuse a tense situation. In the majority of cases, as in this instance, patience leads to eventual release.

Butterfly records needed

'Butterflies for the New Millennium' is the title of a project to map the distribution of all butterflies in Britain and Ireland for a new Atlas in the year 2000. To obtain instructions, recording forms and details of local co-ordinators, send an A4 SAE (with 31p stamp) to Butterfly Conservation, PO Box 222, Dedham, Colchester, Essex CO7 6EY.

'All is not well . . .

on the machair breeding grounds of Britain's most important community of nesting waders. In recent years numbers of most species have fallen by over half and every year the declines continue.'

In *The Outer Hebrides (Western Isles) Bird Report 1997*, a splendid 128-page compilation, these declines are firmly attributed to egg-predation by Hedgehogs *Erinaceus europaeus*, introduced to the Uists in 1974. The RSPB's research on the subject is summarised by Digger Jackson. 'If the current situation persists one of the nation's greatest ornithological treasures could disappear for good.' The Uist machairs held some 17,000 breeding pairs of Dunlins *Calidris alpina*, Great Ringed Plovers *Charadrius hiaticula*,

Prof. Dr Herbert Bruns (1921-1998)

A unique contribution to ornithology was made by the late Prof. Dr Herbert Bruns, who was Editor of the German journal *Ornithologische Mitteilungen* for an astonishing 50 years. He lived to see the publication of not only the first issue of the fiftieth volume, but also the comprehensive index of authors and titles included during the first 50 years. A month before he died, Prof. Dr Bruns handed over responsibility to Dr Walther Thiede, his second-in-command at *Om. Mit.* for the past 15 years.

Flying the flag

It had been a good weekend in North Wales: a flock of about 45 Red-billed Choughs *Pyrhocorax pyrrhocorax* feeding just the other side of a stone wall had seen to that. When we called in at the RSPB Conwy reserve, the Society's flag was flying proudly in the strong northwesterly wind from a remarkably high flag-pole. Now RSPB flags regularly fly from marquees at game fairs and county shows, but this was the first time that we had seen one flying on a nature reserve. The first reaction was one of doubt: do we want flags flying over our nature reserves? Then two things occurred to us. First, at the time the RSPB had something to celebrate: well over one million members had just been announced. Secondly, against the backdrop of an industrial estate and the road-signs for the A55 expressway, it made a 'brave' sight. Keep the flag flying!

Common Redshanks *Tringa totanus*, Common Snipes *Gallinago gallinago*, Oystercatchers *Haematopus ostralegus* and Northern Lapwings *Vanellus vanellus* in the 1980s, but all, except the last two, have now declined by 43%-65%.

All is well with this new *Report*, edited by Brian Rabbitts. In addition to the obligatory systematic list, there are descriptions of three additions to the county list: Veery *Catharus fuscescens* in October 1995 (Phil Benstead) and Swainson's Thrush *C. ustulatus* (Brian Rabbitts) and Blackpoll Warbler *Deudroica striata* (Bob Wemyss) in October 1996. The *Report* is available (price £4.00 incl. p&p) from Brian Rabbitts, 6 Carinish, Lochmaddy, North Uist HS6 5HL.

The rarest of the rare

World Birdwatch, the quarterly magazine of BirdLife International, is always read with enthusiasm at the 'N&c' desk. This is the magazine that puts the populations of the World's birds in true perspective. In the UK, we may discuss the validity of a whole host of species, ranging from Armenian Gull *Larus (argentatus) armenicus* to Iberian Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus (collybita) brehmii*; we may debate whether *Prunella modularis* should be called Hedge Sparrow, Hedge Accentor or Dunnock; but somehow this all pales into insignificance when one reads of the problems facing the World's birds. Only 14 Bali Mynas *Leucopsar rothschildi* survive in the World; in India, two Forest Owlets *Athene blewitti* were seen in late 1997, the previous record being a museum specimen collected in 1884; a female Kakapo *Strigops habroptilus* discovered on Stewart Island, New Zealand, increases the known World

population to 55; and nine young Hawaiian Crows *Corvus hawaiiensis* raised in captivity in 1997 boosted the 15 wild individuals.

In recent years, BirdLife International has instigated some exciting programmes. The BirdLife Conservation Series of publications includes books on the World's endangered species, threatened habitats, seabird islands and Important Bird Areas in the Middle East and South America. In conjunction with Bushnell, the BirdLife International binoculars are now widely available at reasonable cost. The latest innovations, in conjunction with EcoTraveller, are wildlife tours that visit some of the many conservation projects that BirdLife International operates throughout the World. Full details are available from BirdLife International, Wellbrook Court, Girton Road, Cambridge CB3 0NA.

Big Sit gains momentum in UK

The Hampshire Ornithological Society started it in the UK in 1995 (*Brit. Birds* 88: 203) with a 'Spotwatch'. Peter Wilkinson and Alistair Berry took it one stage farther in 1997 by carrying out a 24-hour 'Big Sit', based upon North American rules, at Wicken Fen, Cambridgeshire, managing 62 species by the close of play on 18th May. Surprisingly little interest was shown by the bird-racing fraternity, yet here was a very environmentally sound, easy-to-do, bird-racing technique for those not wishing to dash around quite so much. In 1998, Peter and Alistair threw out a challenge to Ann & Bob Scott, and on 15th-16th May the two teams established their points of observation. Peter and Alistair returned to

the Wicken Fen tower hide; Ann and Bob chose the Titchwell 'Parrinder' hide. A few hiccups for the Wicken team—including having to avoid disturbing a Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes* feeding young in the hide—gave a narrow victory to Titchwell, with 67 species. The two teams managed 91 species in total, which compares favourably with one bird-race team that clocked up 105 species in Cambridgeshire, but had to travel 246 miles (396 km) to do so.

The time has, surely, come to add 'Big Sit' into the annual bird-racing calendar? The two 1998 teams will be out again in 1999, this time better planned, and with sponsorship towards bird conservation. Anybody out there want to take up the challenge?

Cambridge Bird Club's 75th

The Cambridge Bird Club's 75th birthday coincides with millennium year 2000, and celebrations are planned, including a dinner and a special omnibus publication. The Club has strong connections with both 'Town' and 'Gown'. The President or Chairman are anxious to hear from as many past members as possible, to invite them to participate in the celebrations, and, also, because they would welcome items (not to be more than 2,500 words) for inclusion in the publication. These could be on any

ornithological subject, though preferably with a Club connection, such as reminiscences of their time in the Club; photos and other illustrations will be considered.

Robin Cox or Roger Clarke would like to hear from all past Club members. CHAIRMAN: Roger Clarke, New Hythe House, Reach, Cambridge CB5 0JQ. Tel/fax 01638 742447. PRESIDENT: Robin Cox, Linden House, Long Lane, Fowlmere, Cambridgeshire SG8 7TG. Tel 01763 208636, Fax 01763 208549.

French bird festival

Somehow we rather doubt if it would work in the UK, but it most definitely worked in Abbeville/Baie de Somme, France, during 11th-19th April 1998. The entire town and surrounding area was given over to the 8th 'Festival de l'Oiseau'. Unlike the British Birdwatching Fair, where a site is chosen and adapted for the weekend event, the French change the town. On the approaches to Abbeville, all the roundabouts were decorated with banners and huge cut-out models of birds. The streets were similarly decorated with posters and banners and the loudspeakers broadcast bird songs to the shopping public. Virtually every shop displayed something relevant to the event; opticians advertised special deals on binoculars, and book and art shops featured birds very prominently. The local cinema hosted a seven-day film festival:

winner of the 'Grand Prix' was the BBC's *Paracas and the Billion Dollar Birds*. There were excursions to local nature reserves, including the increasingly popular Parc Ornithologique du Marquenterre. The halls and meeting rooms of the town were filled with photographic exhibitions, art displays and carving shows, whilst evening soirées included a bird-imitating competition that allowed some of the local hunters to display their skills.

Via the Channel tunnel, the Marquenterre reserve and Abbeville are only a few hours from London, and the French have expressed considerable interest in welcoming more British birders to the event. Watch out for them at this year's British Birdwatching Fair at Rutland Water, or contact Festival de l'Oiseau, 30 rue Lesueur, 80142 Abbeville cedex, France.

EOU II

The second meeting of the European Ornithologists Union will be held in Gdańsk, Poland, during 15th-18th September 1999. Details are available from the EOU Organising Committee, University of Gdańsk, Bird Migration Research Station, Przebendowo, 84-210 Choczewo, Poland; phone +4858 676 32 20; fax +4858 676 32 65; e-mail eou.meeting@univ.gda.pl

Negative lapwings

We have just completed surveying four tetrads for the RSPB/Cambridge Bird Club survey of breeding Northern Lapwings *Vanellus vanellus* in the East Anglian Chalk Natural Area, and the results were not inspiring. It is frequently claimed that negative records are as valuable as positive, but collecting the negative can be slightly disappointing. We did find two pairs of nesting lapwings, but both were on fields outside our tetrads. Indeed it was difficult to find fields that looked at all suitable as nesting sites. The autumn-sown cereals and the rape fields contained far too much vegetation to be attractive to lapwings. The only consolation on the day was the discovery of some 275 Meadow Pipits *Anthus pratensis*, accompanied by two Water Pipits *A. spinoletta*, on a field of very recently sprayed set-aside. Details of the lapwing breeding survey are available from Manor Farm, Fowlmere, near Royston, Hertfordshire SG8 7SH.

The thrill of a big movement

We do not seem to hear so much about big, impressive bird movements these days. All the bird news seems to focus on individual rarities and the excitement that they generate. Perhaps it is the old bird-observatory blood that raced on the mornings when the bushes were literally alive with small birds, but the excitement and thrill of large numbers is still there. But are they being reported? In recent years we have been lucky enough to add the odd species to a national list or two—and that was exciting—but does it really compare?

On Mahé, in Seychelles, on the morning of 27th September 1996, between 06.15 and 07.45 hours, a minimum of 135,000 Lesser Noddies *Anous tenuirostris* flew south close inshore off Cap Lascars. They were accompanied by 1,500 Wedge-tailed Shearwaters *Puffinus pacificus* and 450 Brown Noddies *A. stolidus*. More recently, at Cap Kaliakra, Bulgaria, on the evening of 25th September 1997, in a period of one hour, over 12,000 Pied Wagtails *Motacilla alba* flew south at 'knee height' and continued out to sea until lost from sight.

How about sending us some more accounts of such spectacular events, rather than the odd individual rarity?

New Recorder

Paul H. Downes, 450 Bruckfield Road, Leominster, Hereford HR6 8SD, has taken over from Keith A. Mason as Recorder for Herefordshire.



RECENT BBRC DECISIONS



This monthly listing of the most-recent decisions by the British Birds Rarities Committee is not intended to be comprehensive or in any way to replace the annual 'Report on rare birds in Great Britain'. The records listed are mostly those of the rarest species, or those of special interest for other reasons. All records refer to 1997 unless stated otherwise.

ACCEPTED: **Long-billed Dowitcher** *Limnodromus scolopaceus* Penclacwydd (Carmarthenshire), 30th November to 10th December. **Marsh Sandpiper** *Tringa stagnatilis* River Clwyd, near Rhuddlan (Flint—then Clwyd), 9th–27th August 1994. **Lesser Yellowlegs** *T. flavipes* Banks and Marshside Marshes and Martin Mere (Lancashire), 18th October into 1998; another, 26th December into 1998. **Desert Wheatear** *Oenanthe deserti* Dungeness (Kent), 16th–17th October; Musselburgh (Lothian), 1st December to 4th January 1998. **Lanceolated Warbler** *Locustella lanceolata* Bardsey Island (Caernarfonshire), 27th September. **Paddyfield Warbler** *Acrocephalus agricola* North Ronaldsay (Orkney), 26th October. **Penduline Tit** *Remiz pendulinus* Hayle (Cornwall), 2nd December 1996 to 10th January. **Isabelline Shrike** *Lanius isabellinus* North Ronaldsay, 30th November. **Two-barred Crossbill** *Loxia leucoptera* Isle of May (Fife), 8th–11th August. **Dark-eyed Junco** *Junco hyemalis* Vicar's Cross, Chester (Cheshire), 15th December into 1998.

M. J. Rogers, Secretary, BBRC, 2 Churchtown Cottages, Towednack, St Ives, Cornwall TR26 3AZ



RECENT REPORTS

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary covers the period from 15th June to 19th July 1998. These are unchecked reports, not authenticated records.

Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis* Summer-plumaged adult, Ballycotton (Co. Cork), from 30th June to 3rd July (first Irish record). **Wilson's Phalarope** *Phalaropus tricolor* Tacumshin (Co. Wexford), from 28th June to 5th July. **Sabine's Gull** *Larus sabini* Eight along south Irish coast during unseasonal southerly gale, 19th July: five off Galley Head (Co. Cork), two off Ballycotton, one off

Carnsore Point (Co. Wexford). **Alpine Swift** *Tachymarptis melba* Spurn (East Yorkshire), 21st June. **Little Swift** *Apus affinis* Barton-on-Humber (Lincolnshire), 26th June. **Black-eared Wheatear** *Oenanthe hispanica* North Rona (Western Isles), 15th–16th June. **Isabelline Shrike** *Lanius isabellinus* Cemlyn (Anglesey), 2nd–18th July.



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APOLOGY Owing to a machine fault, the colour reproduction of the photographs of dowitchers *Limnodromus* in the March issue was substandard. A replacement four-page section (pages 97-100) is included in the centre of this issue for readers to substitute.



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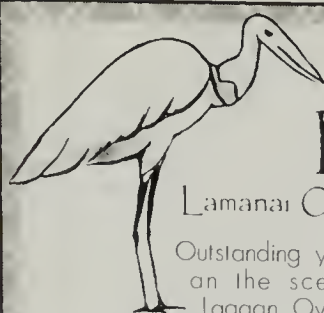
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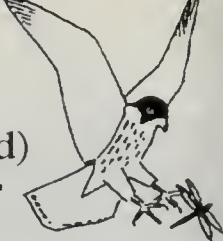
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Taxonomy and identification of chiffchaffs in the Western Palearctic

Peter Clement and Andreas J. Helbig
Illustrated by Brian Small

ABSTRACT The 'chiffchaff complex' within the genus *Phylloscopus* covers a wide area of Europe and northern Asia, and has often been considered to include a number of good species based on physical and vocal differences. The affinities of certain populations, however, were unclear and gave rise to a number of taxonomic treatments. The application of DNA-sequence analysis has now added further insights by revealing the genetic differentiation and the relationships of various taxa and populations. Based on these analyses and a review of vocal and plumage differences, the speciation within the complex is discussed. The results show various levels of divergence and support the recognition of at least four (possibly five) species of chiffchaff: Common Chiffchaff *P. collybita* (with five subspecies), Iberian Chiffchaff *P. brehmii*, Canary Islands Chiffchaff *P. canariensis*, and Mountain Chiffchaff *P. sindianus* (with two subspecies); the taxonomic status of the form *tristis* remains unclear.

Table 1. Breeding distribution of chiffchaffs *Phylloscopus*. See also fig. 1.

COMMON CHIFFCHAFF

<i>P. c. collybita</i>	Britain & Ireland, north to central and southern Scotland, Denmark, southernmost Sweden (Skåne), western and southern Germany and southern Poland, east to Romania; in the south, through France (where co-occurs with <i>P. brehmii</i> in a narrow contact zone in the southwest) northeastern Spain (eastern Pyrénées, Catalunya), Switzerland (except large areas of the Alps), central and western mountains of Italy and the highlands of northeast Sicily, east to Bulgaria, northern Greece and northwest Turkey (where it reaches the Bosphorus)
<i>P. c. abietinus</i>	Those breeding in central and northern Poland are probably intermediates between <i>P. c. collybita</i> and <i>abietinus</i> . Main range is from northeastern Poland through the Baltic Republics, coastal regions of Norway and Sweden (except the south) to about 67°N, east through Finland and European Russia/CIS and across southern Kola Peninsula and shores of White Sea to Pechora river; in the south, through the central Urals to about Odessa on Black Sea, but absent from the rest of southern Ukraine and western and southern Kazakhstan
<i>P. (c.) tristis</i>	East of <i>abietinus</i> (area of overlap or possible hybridisation with latter west of Urals insufficiently known, appears highly variable in extent from year to year): western Siberia east of Pechora river and central Urals north to the tree limit at about 71°N, and east across Siberia to the Lena river and discontinuously probably to the Kolyma or even the Anadyr river; in the south, ranges eastwards from northern Kazakhstan to the central Altai and western Sayan ranges, upper Lena, Tannu Ola and the western shore of Lake Baikal; in recent years, has also extended irregularly to northwest Mongolia
<i>P. c. brevirostris</i>	Highlands of western Turkey and the Black Sea coastlands of northern Turkey
<i>P. c. caucasicus</i>	East of range of <i>brevirostris</i> : lower altitudes (up to 1800 m a.s.l.) of central and western Caucasus, south to Goris, Armenia
<i>P. c. menzbieri</i>	Mountains of northeast Iran, the eastern Elburz and Khorasan ranges north to the Kopet Dag in neighbouring Turkmenia

IBERIAN CHIFFCHAFF

<i>P. brehmii</i>	Extreme southwest France (mainly département of Pyrénées-Atlantiques, in northern foothills of the western Pyrénées), northern and central Spain, with outposts in the south in the higher areas of southern Murcia, Andalucia and around Gibraltar, also most of Portugal; those breeding in northwest Africa (extreme northern Morocco, mountains of northern Algeria and northwestern Tunisia) also considered to be most probably of this taxon, although confirmation required
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CANARY ISLANDS CHIFFCHAFF

<i>P. canariensis</i>	Western Canary Islands: from La Palma and Hierro to Gran Canaria
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MOUNTAIN CHIFFCHAFF

<i>P. s. sindianus</i>	Pamir-Altay mountains of central Russia/CIS east to the northwest Himalayas
<i>P. s. lorenzii</i>	Caucasus: mountains of northeast Turkey and northwest Iran, breeding above 1800 m a.s.l.

In the Palearctic, 'the Chiffchaff' *Phylloscopus collybita* and the various members of the 'chiffchaff complex', which ranges over the whole of Europe and east to Siberia and Central Asia (fig. 1), have long defied the attempts of taxonomists comprehensively to understand their exact relationships. All show a high degree of similarity in appearance, which has confounded simple or congruous classification.

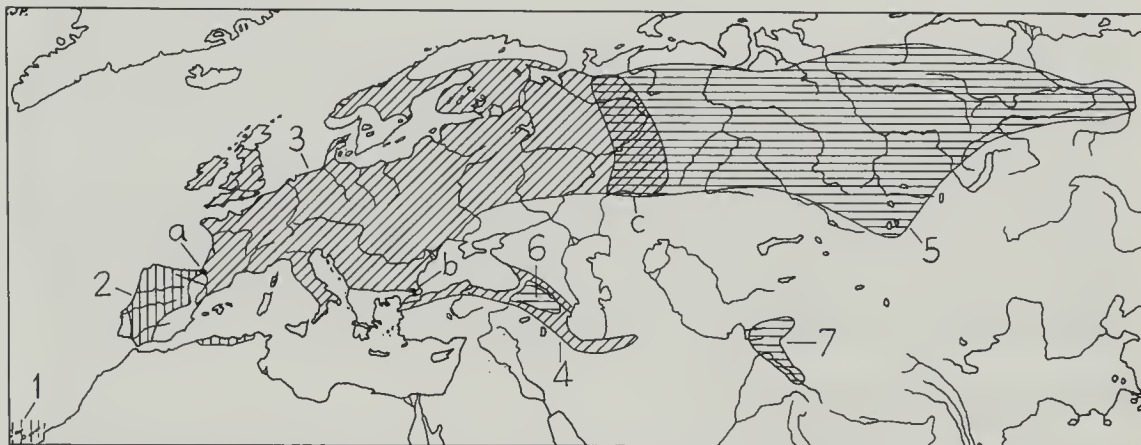


Fig. 1. Breeding distribution of species and subspecies of chiffchaffs *Phylloscopus*. 1. *P. canariensis*; 2. *P. brehmii*; 3. *P. collybita*, northern subspecies *collybita* and *abietinus*; 4. *P. collybita*, southern subspecies *brevirostris*, *caucasicus* and *menzbieri* (W to E order, geographical limits not yet defined); 5. *P. (c.) tristis*; 6. *P. sindianus lorenzii*; 7. *P. s. sindianus*. Zones of secondary contact and overlap: a. between *P. brehmii* and *P. c. collybita*; b. between *P. c. collybita* and *P. c. brevisrostris*; c. between *P. c. abietinus* and *P. (c.) tristis*.

The traditional view of the Common Chiffchaff *P. collybita* and its relatives, set out by Ticehurst (1938) and followed closely by Vaurie (1954) and Cramp (1992), recognised six subspecies: nominate *collybita*, *abietinus*, *tristis*, *canariensis*, *brehmii* (referred to as *ibericus* by Ticehurst), and *exsul*. Four additional forms which need to be considered are *fulvescens*, *brevirostris*, *menzbieri* and *caucasicus*: the first has sometimes been included within *tristis* and the second in *abietinus*; *menzbieri* has been included in both *fulvescens* and *tristis*; and *caucasicus* has only recently been described (Loskot 1991).

Until recently (Voous 1977), Mountain Chiffchaff *P. sindianus* was also treated as a race of Common Chiffchaff. It is now considered a full species, comprising the two races *P. s. sindianus* and *P. s. lorenzii*, although Stepanyan (1978, 1983) considered *lorenzii* worthy of full species status.

Comparison of DNA sequences as a means of reassessing species limits and the relationships of a number of complex species and subspecies groups gives a different perspective and provides a benchmark which, in combination with vocal and visual characteristics, enables a clearer set of distinctions to be drawn between the members of the group. A recent analysis of the 'chiffchaff complex', which compared genetic characters (mitochondrial DNA sequences) and also incorporated both vocal and behavioural factors, confirmed that Mountain Chiffchaff is indeed a valid species and concluded that there are certainly three, and possibly four, distinct species within the group of taxa formerly called *Phylloscopus collybita* (Helbig *et al.* 1996; see that paper for details of the material and methods used). The following 'new' taxonomy was therefore proposed:

Common Chiffchaff *P. collybita*, with five subspecies: nominate *collybita*, *abietinus*, *brevirostris*, *caucasicus* and *menzbieri*

Iberian Chiffchaff *P. brehmii*, a monotypic species

Canary Islands Chiffchaff *P. canariensis*, with two subspecies: nominate *canariensis* and *exsul* (latter presumed extinct)

Mountain Chiffchaff *P. sindianus*, with two subspecies: nominate *sindianus* and *lorenzii*

The taxonomic status of the form *tristis* remains unclear; at present it is provisionally retained within Common Chiffchaff.

In January 1997, *British Birds* accepted the proposed split (*Brit. Birds* 90: 71), which in January 1998 was also adopted by the British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee (BOURC) (see *Brit. Birds* 91: 89; *Ibis* in press). The present paper summarises the reasons for this new classification, and also presents identification criteria, both morphological and vocal.

Evidence from DNA sequences

DNA sequences of small, but sufficient, samples from each of eight chiffchaff taxa (Helbig *et al.* 1996) revealed that all differed genetically from each other (although *caucasicus* appeared hardly distinct); in only one case was there evidence for gene-flow between them (*collybita* and *abietinus*). The taxon *exsul* from Lanzarote, a form of doubtful validity, was not included in this assessment, as it is probably extinct; it has not been recorded since the 1940s, and very few specimens exist (Clement 1995). Broadly, the results showed that:

- (1) *collybita*, *abietinus*, *brevirostris*, *caucasicus* and *tristis* are closely related genetically, but as a group are clearly distinct from all others;
- (2) the same is true of *sindianus* and *lorenzii*;
- (3) *canariensis* and *brehmii* are each highly distinct;
- (4) *brevirostris* and *caucasicus* are extremely similar genetically; and
- (5) all individuals of *brehmii*, *canariensis*, *tristis* and *lorenzii* carry the genotype (DNA sequences) restricted to their respective populations.

The almost total lack of evidence for gene-flow, although an important finding, should be viewed with caution because, for most taxa, relatively few birds were available for analysis. Statistically, the larger the sample, the more likely becomes the detection of occasional gene-flow, if it occurs.

In the case of taxa whose ranges overlap, as with *collybita* and *brehmii* in southwest France and northern Spain, where hybridisation is known to occur (see fig. 2), the lack of genetic mixing was particularly remarkable. Since mitochondrial DNA is inherited maternally, the lack of mixing of the genotypes between *collybita* and *brehmii* indicates that female hybrids or their offspring are sterile. With the Canary Islands Chiffchaff, there was no evidence that mixing has occurred with *collybita*, *abietinus* or *brehmii*, all of which pass through or winter within its range; in addition, the results revealed that *canariensis* and *brehmii*, instead of being closely related, as might be assumed from their geographic proximity, are at least as distinct from each other as they are from *collybita*.

Mountain Chiffchaff (*P. sindianus* including *lorenzii*) was shown to be closely related to, but distinct from, those subspecies of Common Chiffchaff (*caucasicus* and *brevirostris*) which occupy adjacent non-overlapping areas of southwest Asia, since there is no evidence of hybridisation, and hence gene-flow, between them.

Separation of Common Chiffchaff and Mountain Chiffchaff

The separation of these two species is fully supported on both genetic and phenotypic grounds. Mitochondrial genotypes of *P. sindianus* and *P. c. caucasicus* differ as much as is typical of other closely related species. In the Caucasus, where *caucasicus* and race *lorenzii* of Mountain Chiffchaff come into contact, they are separated largely by altitude, the former inhabiting lower mountain forest zones (below 1800 m), with *lorenzii* occurring above this range to the treeline and beyond. Although the two are found side by side in some places, e.g. at about 1800 m in the Zakataly State Reserve, central Caucasus, no mixing of genotypes has yet been detected. Sequences of nominate *sindianus* (Himalayas) and *lorenzii* (Caucasus) are each distinct, and differ from each other to the same extent as *tristis* differs from the main *collybita* group.

Hybridisation in contact zones

Nominate Common Chiffchaff and Iberian Chiffchaff

These two taxa meet in an area of a few thousand square kilometres to the north and immediately to the south of the main Pyrenean range in southwest France and northern Spain (see fig. 2). The majority of pairs breeding in this area are either pure *collybita* or pure *brehmii*, but mixed pairs occur at an estimated frequency of up to 11%. In the same area, some chiffchaffs occur which give mixed song (including components of both), but whether they are hybrids or are individuals which merely learned parts of the wrong song is not known. Such birds, which have been recorded outside the *brehmii* range as far north as Germany (Mühlstegen *et al.* 1994), can present considerable identification problems. The frequency of hybridisation between *collybita* and *brehmii* is no greater than that between Pied *Ficedula hypoleuca* and Collared Flycatchers *F. albicollis* in a similar area of contact in the southern Baltic.

Canary Islands Chiffchaff

Although an endemic resident of the Canary Islands, *canariensis* is not isolated from contact with migrant *collybita* and *abietinus* during both passage seasons. Within the range of *canariensis*, some *collybita* have been recorded singing and apparently holding territory; *brehmii* has also been recorded in the islands, although the numbers involved are probably small. While the possibility of interbreeding with other taxa of the 'chiffchaff complex' exists, no evidence of hybridisation is known and, among the samples assessed for genetic variation (n = 24), there were no foreign genotypes.

Common Chiffchaff group

Within this group of five subspecies, there are two discrete breeding areas: one in central and northern Europe (occupied by nominate *collybita* and *abietinus*),

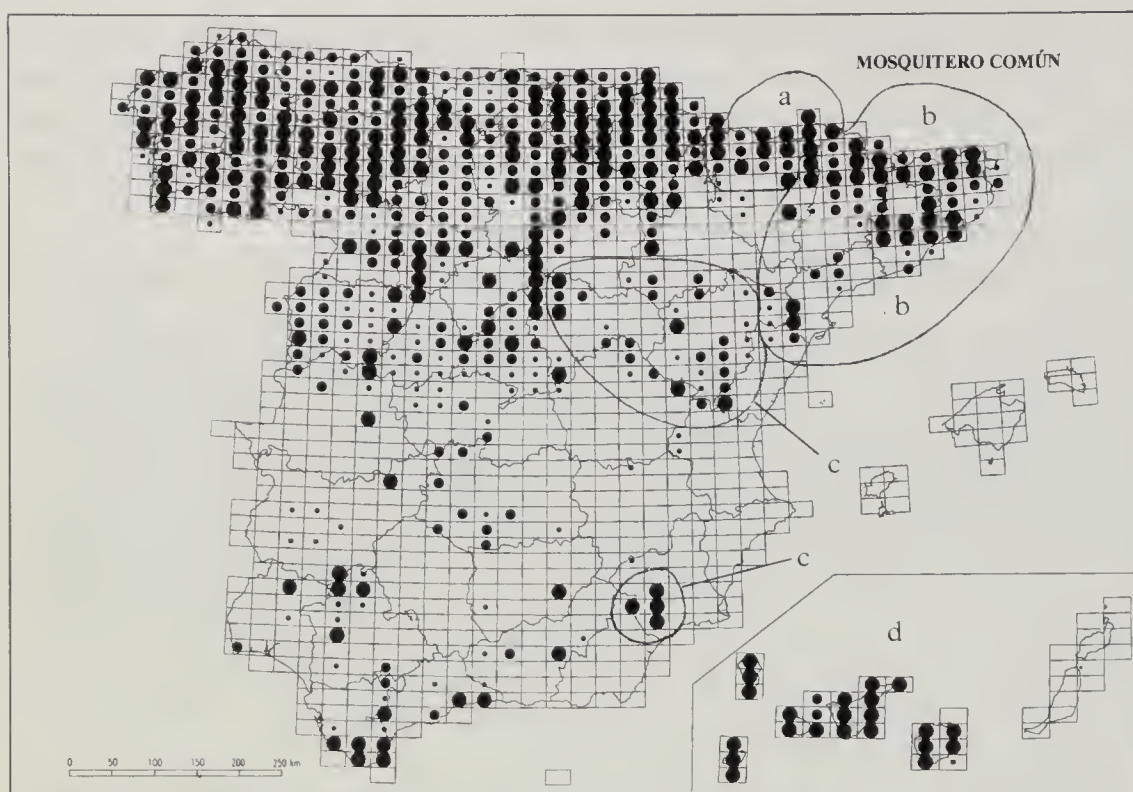


Fig. 2. Breeding distribution of Iberian Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus brehmii* and nominate race of Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita collybita* in Spain (from SEO, 1997, *Atlas de las Aves de España (1975-1995)*), with lines defining areas a-c added by authors. All dots refer to *brehmii*, except: a = 'mixed singers'; b = *collybita*; c = form unknown, clarification required; d = *canariensis*

and one in western Asia (*brevirostris*, *caucasicus* and *menzbieri*). These two subgroups differ in their calls, but have, with minor differences, very similar songs and are clearly closely related. DNA sequences showed a significant divergence between *abietinus* and *brevirostris/caucasicus*, indicating a fairly long period of separation; this is also borne out by slight differences in structure and plumage (see 'Field identification'). On the other hand, *brevirostris* and *caucasicus* are genetically very similar to each other, indicating, as would be expected, a closer relationship than with birds breeding farther north.

The degree of divergence between the northern and southern groups of subspecies is not sufficient to suggest a difference at the species level, despite their period of isolation, and the similarity in songs also suggests that mating between individuals of either group would not be precluded. Since *abietinus* migrates annually through the areas occupied by *brevirostris* and *caucasicus*, occasional interbreeding is likely.

Genetic differences between nominate *collybita* from central Europe and northern *abietinus* are about as large as those between *abietinus* and *brevirostris*. This indicates that, at some point in their evolutionary past, these forms must have been separated. Today, however, they come into broad contact and there is a broad morphological cline between them, indicating free interbreeding.

The status of *tristis*: species or subspecies?

Genetically, *tristis* shows close affinities with the Common Chiffchaff group,

but the plumage (at least of 'typical', eastern populations) and song are quite distinct and even appear to show some affinity with Mountain Chiffchaff (e.g. lack of green plumage tones). Tape recordings of *tristis* song did not elicit any response when played in the *collybita* range, nor was there any response when the reverse was undertaken.

Interactions between *tristis* and *abietinus* in the wide area of potential contact west of the Urals are, however, poorly known. Marova & Leonovich (1993) described the area of hybridisation between these two as extending from the Kanin Peninsula and the Pechora River mouth in the north, south to about Samara in the southern Urals. The occurrence of 'mixed singers' and hybrids is reported to be extensive, but, as in the *collybita* and *brehmii* overlap zone, 'mixed singers' are not necessarily proof of hybridisation; such individuals occur also among other closely related species, such as treecreepers *Certhia* (Helb *et al.* 1985; Thielcke 1972). 'Mixed' singing may result from some individuals adopting parts of the song from another species which is present at high density in their natal area (Clement 1995; Haftorn 1993).

Chiffchaffs singing *tristis* song but showing field characters more similar to those of *abietinus* have been described as yet another subspecies, '*fulvescens*'. Whether they represent a hybrid population is unclear. Hybrids between *tristis* and *abietinus* must be almost impossible to identify, even in the hand, since eastern *abietinus* are greyer and less greenish than their western counterparts, and supposed '*fulvescens*' are less grey-brown than typical eastern *tristis*. Furthermore, '*fulvescens*'-type individuals have been reported to occur throughout the range of *tristis* and apparently are not confined to the area of overlap with *abietinus*. At present, the amount of sampling has been too small to give a clear picture of how extensive the gene-flow between *abietinus* and *tristis* really is, and whether '*fulvescens*' is a valid taxon at all.

The evidence for separating *tristis* as a full species remains contradictory and requires further study.

Vocalisations

Songs (fig. 3)

The song of 'the chiffchaff' is familiar to most European birdwatchers, but this is given only by the Common Chiffchaff (all five races) and, with slight variation, by Mountain Chiffchaff (both subspecies). As would be expected of separate species, the songs of Iberian and Canary Islands Chiffchaffs differ quite markedly from those of Common and Mountain Chiffchaffs. The song of *tristis* is particularly distinct; the differences to the human ear are due mostly to the song's syntax rather than to differences in the structure of song notes.

Differences in songs are important characteristics and potentially act as reproductive isolating mechanisms where birds of different taxa come into contact. For example, the song of *caucasicus*, although having a slightly richer repertoire than those of central European chiffchaffs, is nevertheless recognised and responded to by the latter in playback experiments; conversely, *canariensis* does not respond to the song of *collybita*, nor does *collybita* to that of *canariensis*. An intermediate situation is found in southwestern France:

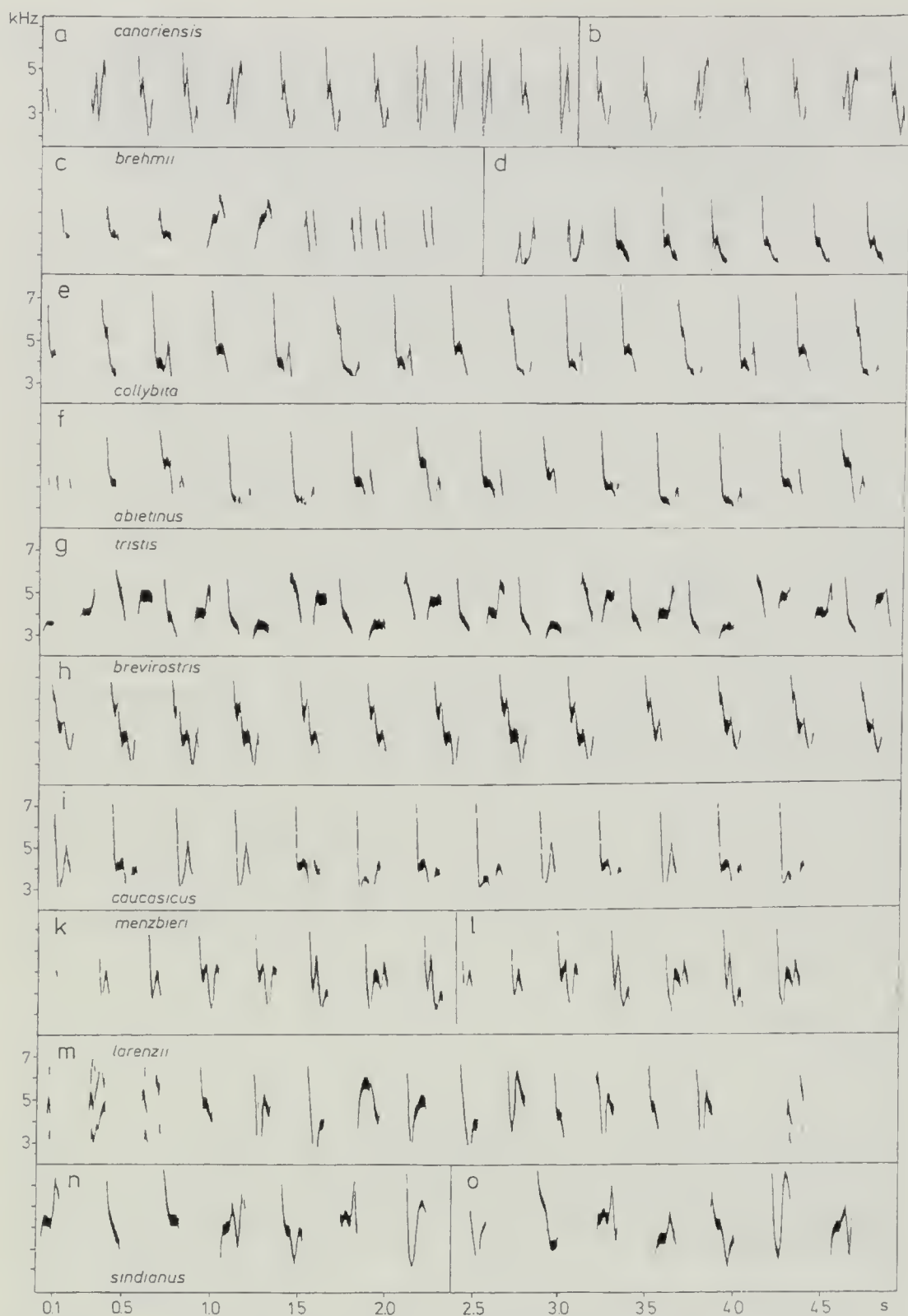


Fig. 3. Sonograms of songs of species and subspecies of chiffchaffs *Phylloscopus*. a,b: *P. canariensis*, Gran Canaria, March 1981; c,d: *P. brehmii*, Gibraltar, April 1961; e: *P. c. collybita*, Germany, May 1991; f: *P. c. abietinus*, Moscow, June 1991; g: *P. (c.) tristis*, Novosibirsk, May 1986; h: *P. c. brevirostris*, Ulu Dag, Turkey, July 1990; i: *P. c. caucasicus*, Kislovodsk, Caucasus, June 1991; k, l: *P. c. menzbieri*, Kopet Dag, Turkmenia, May 1985; m: *P. sindianus lorenzii*, Elbrus area, Caucasus, June 1991; n,o: *P. s. sindianus*, Ladakh, June 1976. (From recordings by J. Martens (a,b,e,g,i,m-o), G. Thielcke (c), B. Schottler & F. Henning (d), P. S. Hansen (h), and I. Marova & P. Tomkovich (k,l))

many male *brehmii* are attracted by the song of *collybita* from central Europe, but central European *collybita* do not respond to the song of *brehmii*.

GROUP 1: Common Chiffchaff (fig. 3 e,f,h,i,k,l). The songs given by the five races of this species need little introduction: a rhythmic series of fairly rapidly repeated 'chiff' and 'chaff' notes run together, beginning on a high note and running slightly downwards for up to 15 seconds to reach an abrupt halt. There are slight variations on this theme, with some notes, especially the 'chaff' notes, given twice and seemingly out of sequence, or with variable endings and the song seeming to fade out. Breeding or territory-holding individuals also give an introductory note, a dry or soft 'tret', variably recorded as a sharp or more harsh 'trr' or 'err-err'.

GROUP 2: Canary Islands Chiffchaff (fig. 3 a,b). The song of *canariensis* is delivered more rapidly and sounds more varied than that of *collybita*, because most individuals combine more than two note types in each upstroke. Some have been likened to those given by both Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* and House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*, as a series of 'chip' or 'chlip' notes such as 'chip-cheep-cheep-chip-chip-cheep' (Clement 1995). Some songs may begin with an ascending note, in certain cases likened to the loud or explosive start of Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti* song, followed by notes which vary in length and are given with some acceleration, before terminating suddenly. Knecht (1960), who made a series of recordings of the species in the 1950s, described the song as 'dschi-dsche-sche-schi-sche-schi-schi', the general pitch lower than that of Group 1 songs and with a faster delivery.

GROUP 3: Iberian Chiffchaff (fig. 3 c,d). The song of *brehmii* has an entirely different structure from those in the previous two groups and lacks any of the clear-cut 'chiff' and 'chaff' notes. Its most characteristic feature is the halting or slow delivery, the slow descent in pitch and the repetition of rising or falling notes: 'chi chi chi tchui tchui tchui tchu tchu tchu' (usually 3+3+3 notes, although the number of notes in each phrase may vary). The first three notes are high-pitched, the next three medium-pitched, and the final three lower-pitched. Furthermore, the last few notes are usually quicker than the first ones, giving the song a kind of accelerated character (G. Elias *in litt.*). The introductory note or notes are similar to those given by the Common Chiffchaff group, but are generally drier or somewhat emphasised, e.g. 'chep' or 'jep', and often form part of the song.

GROUP 4: *tristis* (fig. 3 g) and Mountain Chiffchaff (fig. 3 m,n,o). The songs of *tristis*, *sindianus* and *lorenzii* are more varied in composition and structure, consisting of several note types. Some songs resemble those of Group 1, while others ascend from a low frequency, or start and finish on the same pitch but descend in between; endings can also vary. The form *tristis* has a high-pitched and somewhat squeaky but flowing and melodious warble, usually less broken into distinct phrases, but with clear emphasis on regular phrases which are given or repeated at intervals, e.g. 'suITsitsuITsiuwitssITsiuwITs'.

Calls

Differences in calls also occur among certain members of the complex, mainly

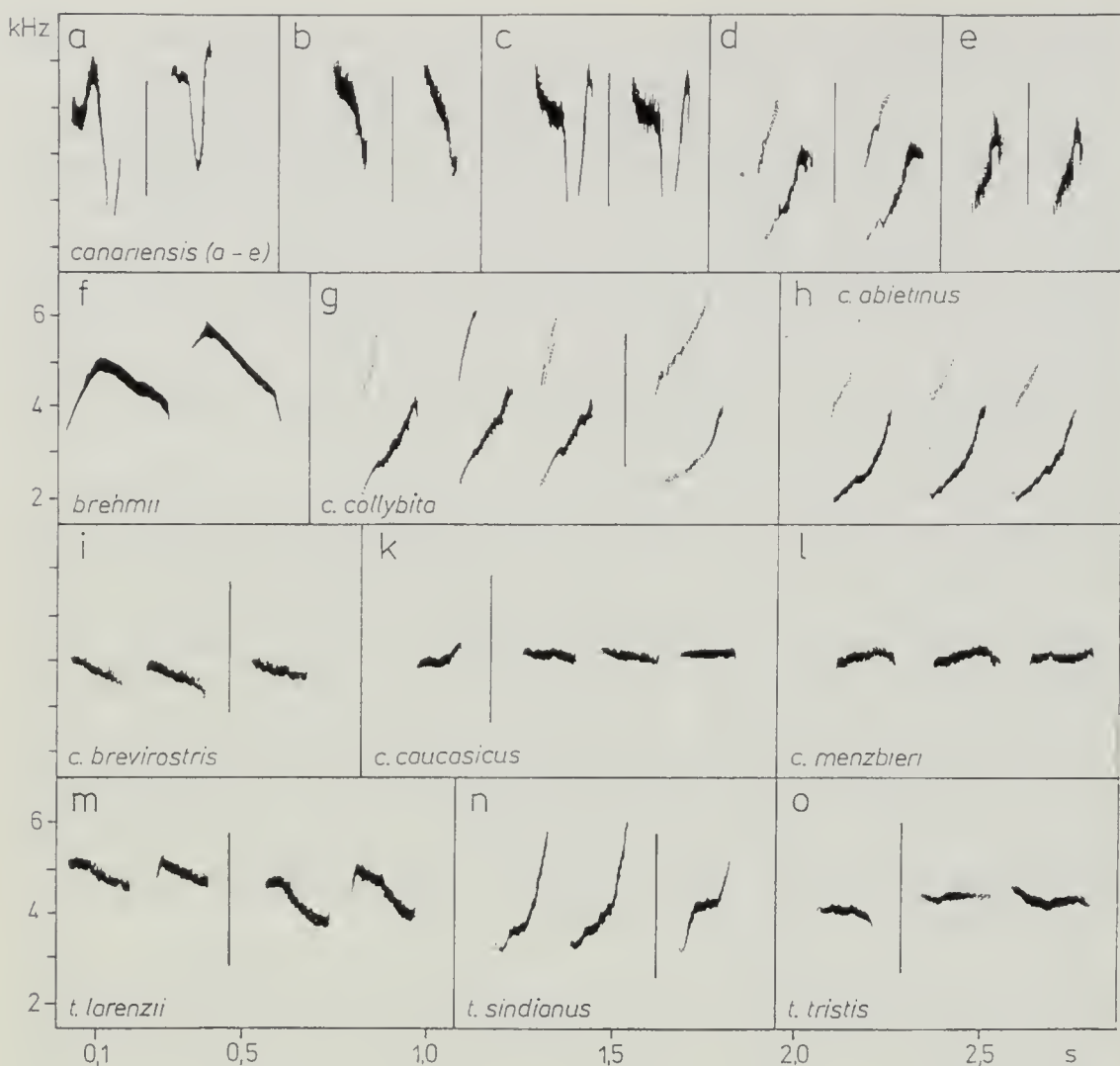


Fig. 4. Sonagrams of typical contact calls of species and subspecies of chiffchaffs *Phylloscopus*. a-c: *P. canariensis*, Canary Islands a: La Palma, b: El Hierro, c: Gomera, d: Tenerife, e: Gran Canaria (two males); f: *P. brehmii*; g: *P. c. collybita* (two males: Mainz and Bergen/Dumme, Germany); h: *P. c. abietinus* (Moscow, Russia); i: *P. c. brevirostris* (two males: Ulu Dag and Hgaz National Park, Turkey); k: *P. c. caucasicus* (two males: Elbrus Mous, Dasht-Nazir and S. Alamdeh, Iran); l: *P. c. menzbieri* (Kopet Dag, Turkmenia); m: *P. s. lorenzii* (two males: Elburz Mountains and Kurush/Daghestan); n: *P. s. sindianus* (two males: Ladakh, Kargil and Tikse, India); o: *P. (c.) tristis* (two males, intervals between notes shortened: W Swerdlowsk and 70 km east of Krasnoyarsk, Russia). (Recordings by J. Martens except a (left), b, c, e (F. Henning); f (M. Salomon); h (I. Marova); i (P. S. Hansen); l (I. Marova, P. Tomkovich); n (right) (P. S. Hansen); o (A. Blinov))

in the contact notes given by individuals on territory. These are similar to calls given by migrants on passage. Both nominate *collybita* and *abietinus* have a soft and rather melancholic, rising 'hooet', which may also be rendered as 'hweet' or 'huid'. The call of eastern populations of *abietinus* is closer in tonal quality to that of neighbouring populations of *tristis*; this call, most frequently heard from autumn passage or wintering birds in Europe, is a thin, high-pitched or shrill and often slightly discordant 'peep', 'weep', 'pseet' or 'cheet'. Some observers have claimed that this call is more typical of *abietinus* and that the 'hooet' or 'hweet' calls are more typical of *collybita*, but it seems equally likely (though requiring further study) that the calls of *abietinus* vary across its range

from west to east. The piping 'peet' note, although more hollow or mellow in tone, is similar in pitch and quality to, or is the equivalent of, the 'hooeet' note of *collybita*, but is distinctly more plaintive and has often been likened to the distress call of a young chicken. While this is the most frequently given call of *tristis*, others include a plaintive and slightly descending 'swee-oo' or 'psee-uu', similar to but less strident or pronounced than that given by Yellow-browed Warbler *P. inornatus*.

Breeding pairs of *tristis* also utter a sharp 'see', 'swee' or 'psee' which is usually level in tone or slightly descending. This is similar to the calls given by *brevirostris* (slightly descending) and by *caucasicus* and *menzbieri* (short, even-toned, whistling notes).

The contact call of *brehmii* is the most distinct: a slightly nasal whistling note with clear downward inflection, 'piu' or 'pew', vaguely similar to the soft call given by the Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*. Autumn birds and immatures also give a shrill call which is similar in tone to the 'peep' or 'weep' notes of *abietinus* and *tristis*.

The Canary Islands Chiffchaff has a range of both ascending and descending call notes, including a sharp 'chirp', 'wheet' and 'hwit'. Surprisingly, the calls differ considerably in frequency and tonal modulation from island to island, but are uniform within islands. Some are close in tone to those given by nominate *collybita*, particularly the short 'hwit', 'huit' or 'tuit' excitement or alarm notes; the 'chirp' note is clearly very similar, if not identical, in tone to some of the notes given in the song.

Field identification

At the outset it has to be stressed that all of these species and subspecies are very similar to each other, differing only slightly in coloration, wing structure and body proportions and, often more clearly, in voice (see above). In zones of contact or overlap, and particularly in the case of migrants on passage, it may not always be possible to identify the individual(s) with certainty unless all points of difference can be noted.

COMMON CHIFFCHAFF

P. c. collybita In spring and summer, the upperparts are dull or dingy green or tinged brownish-olive, except for slightly paler or brighter green rump and uppertail-coverts; the wing-coverts have dark centres (appearing blackish at a distance) and are broadly fringed pale olive-green, although alula lacks pale fringe (but is rarely visible in spring). Flight feathers dark brown (but appear darker), finely edged pale or olive-green (edges absent on many birds by the time they return to breeding areas). Tail as flight feathers, and with fine pale or light olive-green edges slightly broader towards base of feathers; this is often the brightest area of the bird. The 'face' is characterised by thin, pale yellow-tinged whitish supercilia from upper lores (often joining across lower forehead) over eye to the ear-coverts, where they fade; dark of lores extends as a fairly thin eye-stripe across upper ear-coverts, there becoming more diffuse but underlining supercilium; has noticeably broken white upper and

lower eye-crescents; cheeks and ear-coverts pale or yellowish-green, but with darker or brownish feather bases and can appear darker. Underparts dull white or off-white, but with breast and flanks suffused with yellow and with a duller or dingy buff tone on breast sides and extending to flanks; undertail-coverts dull whitish-yellow or variably suffused with olive. Bill horn-brown, with pale or orange-tinged base to lower mandible. Legs black, on some varying from dark brown to greyish-brown; upper surfaces of feet also black, but soles are a contrasting yellowish.

In fresh plumage in autumn, both adults and first-winters are brighter or bright olive-green on upperparts, a shade brighter than in spring. The supercilium is also paler or whiter than in spring and tinged with yellowish-buff behind eye.

P. c. abietinus There is a cline of variation from the darkest, or most olive, individuals (i.e. those with greatest similarity to nominate *collybita*) in western Scandinavia to paler individuals farther east, which ultimately intergrade with the paler *tristis*. In breeding plumage, *abietinus* is very similar to nominate *collybita*, and many (in fresh or worn plumage) are inseparable in the field from the latter. The more distinct individuals of *abietinus* have upperparts brownish-olive, but slightly paler than nominate, with a greyish wash on, particularly, the crown, nape and mantle; cheeks and ear-coverts are also paler and tinged with olive or greenish-yellow. Underparts mainly whitish, on average whiter than nominate, with only a slight yellowish or buffish wash (more noticeable on some individuals) or with yellowish streaks on breast; flanks vary from dingy yellow to sandy-buff, but vent, thighs and undertail-coverts are yellowish-white and paler/whiter than nominate. Bill is black, appearing entirely so in the field, but has slightly paler base to lower mandible. Legs as nominate, or slightly darker/blacker.

Fresh-plumaged autumn individuals are slightly browner than in spring, dull buffish-brown, and paler olive on the rump; uppertail-coverts, edges to wing-coverts and flight feathers, and fringes to base of outer tail feathers are bright olive-green. Some individuals (adults and first-years) may show a faint yellowish or yellowish-buff wash on throat and upper breast.

Structurally, *abietinus* is identical to nominate *collybita*, but in the hand the wings average slightly longer (males 61-68 mm, females 56-62 mm) compared with nominate (males 57-64 mm, females 53-61 mm), and, again on average, the second primary is equal to or slightly longer than the seventh. Moults are largely as that of nominate *collybita*, but Svensson (1992) noted that very few first-year *abietinus* from northern Scandinavia renew their tail feathers before departing in autumn, whereas the majority of central European *collybita* replace their central rectrices before autumn departure.

P. (c.) tristis (Following description refers to typical, eastern *tristis*, and not to the 'fulvescens' phenotype which is more similar to *abietinus*) Spring and summer plumage is paler and greyer than both nominate *collybita* and *abietinus*, and lacks any yellow (except at bend of wing). Upperparts variably buff-brown, tinged with grey or grey-brown, with an olive tinge to lower back, rump and uppertail-coverts (may be restricted to rump and uppertail-coverts); wing-coverts brown, edged olive or slightly paler green. The only yellow is on



Fig. 5. Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* (top six), Canary Islands Chiffchaff *P. canariensis* (bottom left), Iberian Chiffchaff *P. brehmii* (right, next to bottom) and Mountain Chiffchaff *P. sindianus* (bottom right)(Brian Small)

the underwing-coverts, and on perched birds is frequently visible at bend of wing. Flight feathers and tertials dark brown, finely edged olive-green; tail similar, but some may show pale grey-brown edges to bases of outer feathers. Supercilium (which may appear slightly longer than on either nominate *collybita* or *abietinus* and may extend to rear of ear-coverts) is thin, whitish-buff, and underlined by dark lores and eye-stripe; cheeks and ear-coverts pale buff to buffish-brown or mottled darker, and white eye-crescents contrast well against dark lores and eye-stripe. Underparts whitish, often appearing creamy to silvery-white, especially in good light, with pale buff wash on breast (especially the sides) and flanks.

Bill appears all black, but has a very small or restricted area of pale or pinkish-yellow at immediate base of lower mandible. Legs and feet jet-black, with dull yellow soles.

Autumn and early-winter plumage is similar to that in spring, but on average is paler, with a greyish cast to upperparts and a buffish-brown tinge to rump and uppertail-coverts. Wing and tail feathers have fine pale buff-brown edges, and tips of flight feathers are visibly pale buff.

P. c. brevirostris Poorly differentiated from *abietinus*, but has a slightly browner tinge to upperparts, especially on crown, with a well-defined supercilium (especially in front of eye); underparts white, with buffish wash on breast, and may show a small amount of yellow streaks; undertail-coverts off-white or cream. Has shorter primary projection than *abietinus*, creating impression of a slightly longer tail.

P. c. caucasicus (Description based on Loskot 1991, from 60 specimens examined in various Russian and Ukrainian collections) Similar to *abietinus*, but upperparts darker, more brownish and less greenish on mantle; cheeks and sides of breast more brownish; underparts in fresh plumage cream, with vent white, lacking the yellow streaking characteristic of *abietinus*.


P. c. menzbieri Very similar to previous two races, and unlikely to be separable with certainty outside its isolated range. In fresh plumage, upperparts olive-brown, tinged with grey or faintly washed greenish; edges to wing and tail feathers slightly paler. Underparts white, with yellowish-buff tinge to breast, and flanks brownish; undertail-coverts lack any yellow.

IBERIAN CHIFFCHAFF

Single individuals are probably indistinguishable on plumage from nominate *collybita* in the field. The diagnostic calls (see above) are the best character for identifying non-singing individuals. In the contact zone with nominate Common Chiffchaff, male Iberian have on average slightly longer and more pointed wings and longer tarsus (a combination of four measurements separates 95% of individuals: Salomon *et al.* 1997).

CANARY ISLANDS CHIFFCHAFF

Similar in plumage to summer nominate Common, but differs in having slightly but visibly longer bill (12.5-14 mm, compared with 10.5-12.5 mm on Common) and slightly longer tail. Differs from *collybita* most obviously in the



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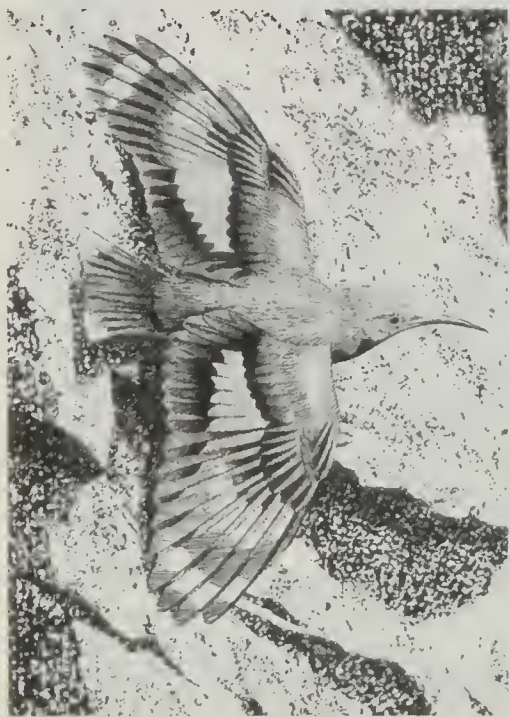


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strong buff-brownish tinge to its underparts, particularly the breast and flanks (spring birds). The pale supercilium is better marked and somewhat longer than that of *collybita*. Upperparts are darker brownish-olive, becoming greenish-olive on lower back, rump and uppertail-coverts; fine edges to flight feathers and base of tail are light green to greenish-olive. Cheeks and ear-coverts olive or tinged duller or browner and mottled paler. Chin and throat off-white, becoming dingy yellow on lower throat and breast, with lower breast and belly strongly or heavily tinged dull buffish-brown; flanks warm buff, and centre of belly to undertail-coverts pale yellowish-white. Leg colour varies from greenish to grey, brown or yellowish-brown. First-years as adults, but have some yellow tips to the buff feathers of breast.

MOUNTAIN CHIFFCHAFF

Both races are very similar in structure to Common Chiffchaff, but slightly more compact in shape, with a rounded wingtip and short primary projection (wing of males 59-64 mm, of females 54.5-62 mm), which creates impression of a slightly longer tail; bill is also slightly shorter (Scott & Siddle in prep.).

P. s. sindianus Separated by range from other taxa of the 'chiffchaff complex'. Similar to *lorenzii* (see below), but slightly paler or warmer brown on upperparts, with more prominent greyish tone to crown, mantle, scapulars and edges to wing-coverts, and greyer still in worn plumage. Supercilium as on *lorenzii*, but not so well defined against the slightly paler head. Underparts also similar, but flanks are warm brown, wearing to a duller or drab brown.

P. s. lorenzii Differs from Caucasian race of Common Chiffchaff in lacking green on upperparts and yellow on underparts. Upperparts brownish (may even approach warm brown) and with a greyish wash; wings and tail dark brown with fine olive-brown edges; underwing-coverts vary from white or off-white to cream or, exceptionally, pale yellow. Head pattern more contrasting than on Common Chiffchaff, with long, well-defined, whitish or whitish-buff supercilium, broadest over lores and tapering to a point beyond ear-coverts, underlined by a distinct and fairly broad dark eye-stripe contrasting with pronounced whitish eye-ring. Underparts off-white, tinged fulvous-brown on breast and often with a buff or rusty wash on flanks, and greyish-white undertail-coverts. Bill black, with pale horn basal half to lower mandible.

Acknowledgments

The authors are grateful to the editor of *Ibis* and the British Ornithologists' Union for permission to reproduce figures from Helbig *et al.* (1996). We are also grateful to G. Elias for assistance with calls and song of *P. brehmii*; and to Eduardo de Juana for providing a copy of the early proofs of the Spanish breeding-bird atlas and Lynx Edicions for permission to include fig. 2.

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LETTER

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PETER GOODEN

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NOTES

These contributions have all been assessed by the eight members of either the Behaviour Notes Panel or the Identification Notes Panel

White Storks wintering in northeast Algeria

The northeast Algerian breeding population of White Storks *Ciconia ciconia* normally leaves for sub-Saharan winter quarters in July and August, at the time when other long-legged marshbirds arrive to winter alongside the large resident population of Cattle Egrets *Bubulcus ibis*. Since 1994, however, small parties of White Storks, varying in size from two to 17 individuals, have been observed at several sites up to the end of the year, behaving as if residents, and unconfirmed reports exist of overwintering elsewhere in northwest Africa.

What prompts the White Stork to cross the desert to winter south of the Sahara is unclear. Low temperatures can hardly be a factor: the recent climate in northeast Algeria is relatively mild, and the storks usually return to their local breeding sites during the coldest period (January–February). There is no apparent shortage of food (see Boukhamza *et al.* 1995); indeed, our unpublished data indicate that food, especially ground beetles (Carabidae), is plentiful, even peaking during autumn–winter.

Over the last 100 years, the status of several species of wildfowl (Anatidae) has changed within the area (Heim de Balsac & Mayaud 1962), and in recent decades a number of Mediterranean and desert passerines have expanded their range northwards (Isenmann 1990), as have several insect species (Samraoui 1996). Whether this development is linked to global warming is an intriguing possibility.

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Common Swifts flying with lowered legs

On 26th July 1994, at Cranham, Essex, a large concentration of about 1,250 Common Swifts *Apus apus* fed for most of the day over an extensive field of recently harvested Rape *Brassica napus*. The sky was virtually cloudless, and the temperature was about 27°C; a slight easterly breeze occasionally blew. While checking through the loose wheeling flocks with binoculars, I became aware that some of the swifts flying close by me had clearly lowered their tibia and tarsus, forming a visible 'V' shape with their legs. Although this behaviour was not adopted by all the swifts that were close enough for this to have been

visible, I estimated that 25% of them were flying with their legs lowered. I assumed that, in the temperature and conditions that prevailed, this was a cooling strategy: the air rushing past exposed legs in the shade of the bird's underbody helped to maintain the required heat balance.

I have not come across this behaviour by aerial feeders before.

JOHN H. SMART

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EDITORIAL COMMENT Prof. C. M. Perrins has commented: 'I do not recollect having heard of swifts flying like this and, I suppose, some sort of cooling-down might be the correct strategy. However, I can suggest an alternative. Lowering the undercarriage, while it does not improve flying efficiency, does have the effect of increasing the drag and so slowing the bird down. One not infrequently sees this with birds such as vultures (Accipitridae) and gulls (Laridae) where they are in updraughts and dangle their feet. From the description, the birds were feeding fairly low and presumably on fairly small prey. Lowered flight speed might enable them to hunt more efficiently in these circumstances.' In an earlier note describing similar leg-trailing by European Bee-eaters *Merops apiaster* and other species in Spain and East Africa (*Brit. Birds* 76: 139-140), Prof. D. M. Bryant considered the behaviour likely to be a thermoregulatory device.

Syrian Woodpecker using wall crevice as 'anvil'

On 26th October 1994, at Nagymáros, northern Hungary, I saw a male Syrian Woodpecker *Dendrocopos syriacus* fly through a garden and land about 1 m from the ground on the side of a stone wall, where it clung with difficulty before finding its grip. It was carrying what appeared to be a fruit stone, which it wedged into a crack in the wall. The woodpecker dropped to the ground for a few seconds, before flying back up to its initial spot on the wall. It then proceeded to hack away for over a minute at the item, which was fixed firmly in this 'anvil', until it was disturbed by passers-by and flew away.

GERARD GORMAN

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EDITORIAL COMMENT Although neither *BWP* (vol. 4) nor Winkler *et al.* (1995, *Woodpeckers: a guide to the woodpeckers, piculets and wrynecks of the World*) specifically mentions cracks in stone walls as being used as anvils, this species will in fact use virtually any suitable crevice for such purposes. Ian Dawson has added that it is 'not unexpected that it would use crevices in walls, as it is much more closely associated with broken settlement than is Great Spotted Woodpecker *D. major* where the two species co-exist.'

Robin feeding Hedge Accentor in winter

On 22nd January 1995, on one of my regular walks along the River Ivel at Blunham, Bedfordshire, I was watching, from a range of about 10 m, a Hedge Accentor *Prunella modularis* which was progressing in its typical

'shuffling' fashion among leaf litter below bushes. Apparently purely by chance, it came close to a Robin *Erithacus rubecula*, which had just caught an insect of some sort. The Robin fed this insect to the accentor, an act performed in a moment, with no preliminary sign from either bird, nor any subsequent reactions; the accentor just moved on. Whereas the Hedge Accentor appeared to take such a 'gift' for granted, I was very surprised. At the time, I wondered whether the accentor's flicking wings had triggered a response from the Robin, by simulating the quivering wings of a begging female or juvenile Robin.

I could recall no previous instance of an adult of one species feeding an adult of another, but have subsequently found reference to two observations by Kenneth Halliday: a Crested Tit *Parus cristatus* feeding an adult Blue Tit *P. caeruleus* in early November and a Blue Tit feeding a Robin, also in November (*Scottish Bird News* 37: 5).

J. T. R. SHARROCK

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Behaviour of Blackcaps in winter in Jersey

In Jersey, Channel Islands, the Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla* is considered common in winter in a variety of habitats, particularly gardens and parkland. Blackcaps often remain for several weeks in single trees or shrubs: behaviour well documented for this species (*BWP*, vol. 6), which is even known to return to the same site in consecutive winters (*Ibis* 137: 70).

At the Jersey Wildlife Preservation Trust (Jersey Zoo), ornamental gardens with many exotic trees and shrubs support several male and female Blackcaps throughout the winter. The most-frequented shrub is the Castor-oil Plant *Fatsia japonica*, a dense evergreen which produces large quantities of black berries. Blackcaps may spend the entire winter inside single isolated *Fatsia*, and from late winter males may sing from deep within the shrub for several weeks, although nesting has never been proven in the Zoo grounds.

The other plant most favoured during winter is a Dove Tree (also known as Pocket-handkerchief Tree or Ghost Tree) *Davidia involucrata*, 6.5-8 m tall. Following the loss of its leaves, this tree is very open, affording no cover. It produces numerous medium-sized apple-like fruits, on which several bird species, notably Blackcap, Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* and Great *Parus major* and Blue Tits *P. caeruleus*, feed. Each winter, one Blackcap defends the tree against all conspecifics, and at times against other species. When disturbed, the defending Blackcap retreats into nearby denser vegetation, usually a Holly tree *Ilex aquifolium*. In years in which the Dove Tree produces a lot of fruit, these remain on the tree until early February, by when all have been eaten or have fallen. During the winter of 1993, the Dove Tree was defended by a male Blackcap, and in 1994 by a female.

H. GLYN YOUNG

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Flight of Magpie

The usual flight of the Magpie *Pica pica* is described in *The Handbook* (vol. 1) as 'direct, rather slow, with fairly rapid wing beats'. Bannerman (1953, *The Birds of the British Isles*, vol. 1) noted 'their short wings being rapidly beaten', while *BWP* (vol. 8) states that 'over long distance, action alternates slightly desperate bursts of rapid wing beats with stalling glides . . .'. None of these, however, seems adequately to describe the species' flight action.

While watching Magpies either flying short distances or making longer high flights, I have noticed that the 'normal', rather slow wing beats are constantly interspersed with short bursts of extremely fast wing-beating (presumably *BWP*'s 'desperate bursts of rapid wing beats'). During these short bursts, the beats appear to be at almost double the usual rate. The 'stalling glides' often occur when Magpies are dropping to land; the species can, of course, cover a fair distance simply by gliding.

E. J. WISEMAN

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EDITORIAL COMMENT The best description we can find of the Magpie's flight is that by W. H. Hudson (1911, *British Birds*): 'The wings are very short, and the flight is slow and somewhat wavering, and at every three or four yards there is an interval of violent wing-beats, during which the black and white of the quills mix and become nearly grey.'

Carrion Crow devouring Common Toad

In the early afternoon of 29th April 1990, at Staunton Harold Reservoir, south Derbyshire, I noticed an incubating Carrion Crow *Corvus corone* leave its nest in a waterside oak *Quercus* and glide down to the water's edge, where it landed briefly before taking to the air carrying what appeared to be either a frog or a toad. The crow flew a short distance, landed again and began to pick at its catch, before starting to eat it. After a few minutes, it carried the animal back to the water's edge in its bill and immersed it in the shallow water, where the crow shook its head to wash the food; it then proceeded to eat a few more small morsels. After some 8-10 minutes of undisturbed activity, the crow flew back to its nest. On inspecting the prey, I found the remains of a Common Toad *Bufo bufo* approximately 8 cm long: all that was left was the whole of the warty back skin, attached to which were the head, including eyes, and the rear limbs, the spine having been broken; the rest had been eaten. I was surprised that a Carrion Crow would eat a toad, an amphibian renowned for its habit of secreting a foul-tasting, irritant fluid when handled.

ANTHONY MESSENGER

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EDITORIAL COMMENT Toads seem very rarely to be eaten by any birds. In June 1989, a Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius* was seen carrying a live toad, but whether or not it ate this was not ascertained (*Brit. Birds* 86: 21).

Murmuring calls of young Common Ravens

On several occasions during April 1995, near West Quantoxhead, Somerset, I listened from cover to the sounds coming from a cliff nest of a pair of Common Ravens *Corvus corax* in a disused quarry. As expected, the commonest vocalisations of the four well-grown young were harsh, rasping, food-begging calls, uttered especially if an adult Common Raven approached. At about 04.30 GMT on 29th April, however, when the young were 39-41 days old, I heard pleasing and varied murmuring sounds of both high and low frequency. It sounded as though the young were greeting a new day, or even each other; on two occasions, these vocalisations continued for about a minute. This type of call is not mentioned in *BWP* (vol. 8).

A. P. RADFORD

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EDITORIAL COMMENT Derek Goodwin has commented that he has heard 'apparently comparable sounds from young Eurasian Jays *Garrulus glandarius* still in the nest when apparently not very hungry and "contented".'

Unusual roosting sites of Common Starlings

On the evening of 25th September 1991, in Burnley, Lancashire, I saw a flock of about 125 Common Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris* swirling around the tall disused chimney of Fulfilled Mill. My first thought was that they were reacting to the presence of a predator, but it transpired that they were in fact assembling to roost inside the upper part of the chimney, which is about 43 m tall and with the opening at the top some 1.5 m across. I watched them go in on that evening and on several other occasions during the ensuing winter.

On 20th October 1991, another roost developed elsewhere in Burnley, this time in Ivy *Hedera helix* on the walls of two stone-built terrace houses. About 500 Common Starlings used it until February 1992, when the householders removed the Ivy.

On 27th February 1995, I watched an assembly of about 2,000 Common Starlings repeatedly circling the tall disused chimney of another Burnley mill. Unlike those at Fulfilled Mill, however, the starlings eventually descended to enter a semi-derelict engine-house below, going in via what had been a side window. A friend told me that they had been using this site for at least three months.

In 50 years of local bird study, I have never come across Common Starlings roosting inside tall chimneys, in Ivy or inside semi-derelict buildings, and I can find no references to similar sites in the standard literature.

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Height of Corn Bunting nests above ground

BWP (vol. 9) mentions that nests of Corn Buntings *Miliaria calandra* have been recorded at up to 1.5 m above the ground in bushes, and that they are often built in low branches of trees in Morocco (height not specified). During the late 1970s and the 1980s, I found many Corn Bunting nests in southern

Spain, especially in the Tarifa region, where the species was abundant: most were on the ground in crops and weeds, but bush nests were also extremely common, including at least half-a-dozen above 1.5 m (highest about 2.5 m); one was about 3 m up in the branches of a Cork Oak *Quercus suber*. On 17th May 1994, in southern Morocco, I found a nest containing eggs 5 m above ground in an olive tree *Olea*.

PETER CASTELL

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EDITORIAL COMMENT Dr David Harper, in a major paper on Corn Buntings (*Brit. Birds* 88: 401-422), stated that only a few studies had found bush-nesting at all common and mentioned records of nests up to 1.7 m above ground.



MONTHLY MARATHON



Almost nobody was fooled by the Common Coot *Fulica atra* in plate 88, photographed in Shetland by Wendy Dickson in April 1998, although 6% plumped for Red-knobbed Coot *F. cristata* and the pale flight feathers deceived one entrant into naming it as Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina*.

This month's hurdle appears below (plate 99).

For a free SUNBIRD brochure, write to PO Box 76, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 1DF; or telephone Sandy (01767) 682969.



▲ 99. 'Monthly marathon.' Photo no. 145. Sixth stage in tenth 'Marathon'. Identify the species. Read the rules (*Brit. Birds* 91: 305), then send in your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th October 1998.



REVIEWS

A Field Guide to the Birds of Japan. [In Japanese]

By Takuya Kanouchi, Naoya Abe & Hideo Ueda.

Yama-Kei, Tokyo, 1998. 624 pages; over 2,200 colour photos. ISBN 4-635-07007-7. 3,150 Yen. Three CDs/cassettes of sound recordings. 9,450 Yen per set.

As a photographic field guide, this is the best I have seen (but not read; I confess to having perused only the pictures). As a collection of photographs of the birds of Japan, it is superb. Of conventional field-guide size, it covers 479 species (over 580 occur in Japan) with half a page to two pages per species, and at least one photo of the rarer species, but as many as nine (though more typically six or seven) where a range of plumages or races needs to be shown.

English and scientific names are given for each species or race, while the distribution, migratory status and months of occurrence in Japan are clearly shown. But beware: photos of 'similar species', included for comparison, may cause confusion. For example, the nine photos in the two-page account of Marsh Sandpipers *Tringa stagnatilis* include a Wood Sandpiper *T.*

glareola. For this and similar reasons, the addition of a couple of short introductory paragraphs in English, explaining the layout and general organisation of the book, would have been most helpful. Perhaps the publishers might consider printing a small 'slip-in' sheet including this information if they are seriously considering selling to the non-Japanese market. Even without this, anyone wanting an extensive collection of excellent photographs of the majority of Japanese bird species will want to purchase this well-produced and remarkably compact book.

The CDs include 283 of the species in the book; an index enables the disc/track with the calls and/or song of each species to be located easily. Symbols in the book indicate those species that are featured on the CDs.

RICHARD CHANDLER

The Breeding Birds of South-east Scotland: a tetrad atlas 1988-1994.

By R. D. Murray, M. Holling, H. E. M. Dott & P. Vandome.

Scottish Ornithologists' Club, Edinburgh, 1998. 358 pages; 25 colour plates; 168 line-drawings; 143 distribution maps. ISBN 0-9512139-1-1. £27.00.

This well-produced large-format book shows, with very clear maps and descriptive text, the results of seven years of fieldwork by 230 observers in the Lothian and Borders regions of Scotland. As well as the tetrad (2 km × 2 km square) distributions—with three sizes of red square corresponding to confirmed, probable and possible breeding, and open squares showing observed but no breeding evidence—there are small maps showing the 1968-72 distribution and 1988-94 distribution by 10-km squares. Naturally, the tetrad distribution is very much more revealing. There are also diagrams showing distribution according to altitude and, often, a relevant habitat type (e.g. 'unimproved grassland' for Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra*; 'any woodland' for Blackbird *Turdus merula*; 'mixed and deciduous woodland' for Wood Warbler

Phylloscopus sibilatrix; 'coniferous woodland' for Common Redpoll *Carduelis flammea*).

Naturally, as compiler of 'the *Old Atlas*' (the first time that I have seen this abbreviation used, and which rubs salt into my wrinkles), I am fascinated by all bird-distribution atlases. This one, while following a now-well-established pattern, is of a particularly high standard: very attractive, very easy to use, and filled with both the broad brush strokes and the fine detail which make bird distributions so exciting. Change is inevitable—e.g. Twites *Carduelis flavirostris* have gone (almost), but Siskins *C. spinus* have come—and this is a very fine (in both its senses) baseline for a repeat in ten or 20 years' time.

Sponsorship from East of Scotland Water, Scottish Natural Heritage and the RSPB, as well as the support of the

Scottish Ornithologists' Club, is no doubt responsible in part for both the quality of this book's production and the inclusion of 25 aerial views in colour, these latter wonderfully portraying the range of habitats of this part of Scotland. This book

really does do justice to the labours of the observers who produced 91,000 records of 168 species in the 1,756 tetrads in southeast Scotland, and those of the four authors/compiler/editors.

J. T. R. SHARROCK

Endemic Bird Areas of the World: priorities for biodiversity conservation.

By Alison J. Stattersfield, Michael J. Crosby, Adrian J. Long & David C. Wege.

BirdLife Conservation Series No. 7. BirdLife International, Cambridge, 1998. 846 pages; 10 colour plates; 160 black-and-white plates; 30 black-and-white illustrations; over 200 maps. ISBN 0-946888-33-7. Paperback £37.00.

One quarter of the World's bird species have restricted ranges (defined here as less than 50,000 km²). Endemic bird areas (EBAs) contain two or more such species. This book documents the 218 EBAs, which quite surprisingly cover only 1% of the Earth's surface and yet encompass the complete World distributions of 20% of the World's birds. Most EBAs are tropical and have forest as their main habitat. Seven countries (read the book to discover which they are!) have more than ten EBAs.

This book is beautifully produced (perhaps a little too beautifully for a book

which should be used to save the World's birds?) and makes fascinating reading. It makes the case well that conserving these areas is a global conservation priority. If we could map the distributions of all restricted-range species, not just birds, would we find areas of great overlap? This book suggests that we might. If this is so, then conserving EBAs would help conserve much of the World's biodiversity.

This book is a great achievement of the BirdLife International partnership and an extremely important book for global biodiversity conservation. MARK AVERY

World Bird Species Checklist: with alternative English and scientific names.

By M. G. Wells.

Worldlist, Bushey, 1998. 671 pages. ISBN 0-9532420-0-5. £29.50.

This is a wonderful addition to the library of any ornithologist, birdwatcher or birder. The ornithological literature is bedevilled with alternative English names for the same species (and the same name for different species), and scientific names do not always help, even within Europe, particularly if you go back 30 or 40 years. This book solves your problems. Following the familiar sequence, with most recent splits included, here is a list of all the species in the World, with the majority of the names which they have been called, not only listed, but also indexed. The list itself occupies 427 pages, covering 9,951 species; there are 22 pages of references in the bibliography; the index of scientific names occupies 87 pages, and the index of English names 115 pages.

It would be a miracle if a book containing so many names had no errors; the few that there are stand out and will doubtless be corrected in subsequent editions (the author asks users to send in details of any errors,

and also to suggest any improvements which might be made to the format and presentation). I could argue with the detail of many of the English names (e.g. Olive Tree Warbler for *Hippolais olivetorum*, which common sense decrees should be Olive-tree Warbler) and the haphazard use of modifying words (such as 'Leaf-' among some of the *Phylloscopus* warblers), although many of these merely reflect inconsistencies in previous literature. It is a pity, however, that the opportunity has not been taken to standardise names, with accepted English usage of hyphens, capital letters and so on. Perhaps this will be addressed in the second edition, which will surely follow by public demand.

From the very elegant dust jacket to the substantial binding and the excellent choice of a very clear typeface and well-planned layout, this is a high-quality product, easy to use and much needed. J. T. R. SHARROCK

Checklist of the Birds of Eurasia. By Ben F. King. (Ibis Publishing Company, Vista, 1997. 112 pages. ISBN 0-934797-15-3. Paperback \$19.95) How can one possibly take seriously a checklist of European and Asian birds which refers to Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* as 'Yellow-hooded Wagtail', Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis* as 'Brown Tree-Pipit' and Olive-backed Pipit *A. hodgsoni* as 'Olive Tree-Pipit', and applies the name 'Pied Wagtail' to *Motacilla aguimp*? These are four examples from scores of such ill-considered names which destroy any value which the checklist might have had. The inappropriate sprinkling of hyphens and incorrect use of capitalisation are additional constant irritations. This is all a great pity, since, with a little bit of liaison with the BOU or with *British Birds*, the absurdities could have been avoided and the list would have been useful for reference purposes. As it is, it merely adds further chaos to an already confusing situation.

JTRS

Bill Oddie's Birds of Britain and Ireland. By Bill Oddie. (New Holland, London, 1998. 240 pages. ISBN 1-85368-898-3. £12.99) If you are a beginner or you want to encourage and inspire a new birdwatcher, here is the perfect book: a field guide which includes over 200 of the more common species and 55 rare or localised birds.

Bill Oddie's clear, easy-to-read text includes notes on behaviour, plumage, distribution and habitat, as well as hints on calls and songs. Each species is given its own page and the information is both detailed and simple. The book is crammed with excellent pictures by David Daly, Stephen Message and Clive Byers, showing birds in various plumages and positions. There are also several pages comparing similar species in their natural habitat and a section at the front on bird topography to help with sketching and describing birds. In summary, this is an excellent book to help and to stimulate anyone who is at all interested in birds.

MATTHEW SLAYMAKER

A Natural History of the Pheasant. By Peter Robertson. (Swan Hill Press, Shrewsbury, 1997. 160 pages. ISBN 1-85310-564-3. £24.95) This is a personal account of the author's studies of this most artificial of introduced birds, so important because of its impact upon the management

of the countryside, modified for its benefit. Comparisons with its preferred habitat in its natural range, and in other parts of the World where it has been introduced, reveal remarkable adaptability. Here, we tend to think of it as a bird of woodland edge and wide woodland rides, but the dykes of treeless East Anglia also provide the necessary cover. There are index entries of 'Egg dumping', 'Harems' and 'Infidelity' (shades of the shy, retiring *Prunella modularis*). It was a surprise to find as many as five pages devoted to 'Flying ability' for a species which most of us would think of as flying only when asked to provide entertainment for the local gentry. There is, however, much more to the Common Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus* than a mere flying casserole. Do note, in case you meet the author in person, that Peter Robertson is not amused when asked whether The Game Conservancy Trust employed him as a pheasant-plucker. His book, however, will entertain as well as educate you.

JTRS

The Natural History of Selborne. Double CD/double cassette. By Gilbert White. (John Paterson, Winchester, 1998. Total running time 2 hrs 28 minutes. CDs £15.00, cassettes £12.50) Billed as 'a journey into 18th century rural England', this can be both fascinating and slightly depressing. Actor Benjamin Whitrow brings to life the letters of Gilbert White against a backdrop of the wildlife featured. Red-billed Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*, Dipper *Cinclus cinclus*, Corn Crake *Crex crex*, Raven *Corvus corax* and Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedipnemus* all feature, where now all are rare or unknown in Hampshire and Sussex. The anecdotes and theories remind twentieth-century naturalists how much about animal behaviour was known over 200 years ago (though scepticism that hirundines migrate is revealed in a theory that House Martins *Delichon urbica* fly in April in order that their blood can recover from winter torpor). It becomes mildly depressing only when one steps into the countryside of modern England and sees the contrast. What would White have made of today's comparatively silent fields? At 2½ hours, this is a long 'talking book', but an accessible way into this classic and perhaps ideal to enliven a journey down the A3 and A27.

JULIAN HUGHES



Sabine's Gulls in western France and southern Britain

Norman Elkins and Pierre Yésou

ABSTRACT Meteorological factors determining the arrival of Sabine's Gulls *Larus sabini* in western France and southern Britain are described. The largest coastal and inland concentrations are associated with very deep depressions moving across or to the north of the Bay of Biscay and the western approaches of the English Channel, although flocks at sea and off coasts in western France are also recorded in settled weather. This pattern indicates a late-summer and autumn feeding area in Biscay much closer inshore than was formerly acknowledged. The majority appear to be adults. The increasing frequency of large concentrations in the last 20 years may reflect an increase in the number of competent observers and/or the gull population using the Bay of Biscay. Data also suggest that there has been an increasing incidence of deep depressions over the region, and hence of southwesterly or westerly gales. The presence of large numbers on the French coast may on some occasions, however, be linked to temporary oceanographic episodes, particularly the warming of waters which lead to planktonic blooms.

The occurrence ashore of rare gulls is often due to displacement by strong winds (e.g. Elkins 1987). In western Europe, this has always been held to be true of the Sabine's Gull *Larus sabini*, a pelagic migrant. Until the 1950s, its wintering area was thought to be mainly north of 50°N, with some found in the Gulf of Gascony (Fisher & Lockley 1954). Since then, the winter quarters of the Atlantic migrant population have been located in the Benguela Current upwelling off southern Africa (Mayaud 1965; Lambert 1967). In the Bay of Biscay, where the species has been known as a migrant since the last century (Mayaud 1961), they are present from July to December. Early records are from the third week of July, with the species becoming regular from 20th August onward. Only a few remain after October (Yésou 1993; Recorbet 1996). Autumn passage is observed over the shipping lanes in western Biscay and southwards off the coast of western Iberia (e.g. Bourne 1965).

From time to time, unusually large numbers occur on the coasts of France and Britain. Harrison (1985) suggested that a major staging area, probably involving several thousand individuals, exists west of Belle-Île off the coast of northwest France, although his reference is suspect (W. R. P. Bourne *in litt.*). Prior to the 1970s, an autumn total of 75 in the whole of Britain was considered exceptional, and in the 1990s annual totals have been only slightly higher (Fraser *et al.* 1997). Coverage by observers along the Biscay coast of France is much less complete than in Britain, so that influxes there may have been missed in the past. Substantial numbers have, however, been recorded in both countries in recent years. It is the purpose of this paper to relate the results of an investigation into the meteorological aspects of these influxes, and to discuss the immediate source of the birds. We have also taken the opportunity to place on general record recent unpublished French observations of the species.

Methods

Ornithological literature was searched to identify the major autumn influxes and coastal concentrations in Britain and France during the 20 years 1977-96. All concentrations of 100 or more Sabine's Gulls at one site on the same date were considered, but smaller concentrations were also noted. Daily weather charts for the months of August, September and October for the same period were scrutinised, and the incidence of severe gales identified. Especially important was the passage of deep depressions eastwards or northeastwards across the area bounded by latitudes 52°N and 47°N, and longitudes 10°W and 5°W. Deep depressions were defined as those with central pressures at or below 985 hPa (1 hectoPascal = 1 millibar). Such depressions are very rare so far south in the North Atlantic in summer and autumn, and may be spawned from tropical storms in the western sector of the Ocean. Depressions of this depth invariably create very powerful winds, and it is these which are of note when considering displaced seabirds. The approximate duration of associated gales from directions conducive to coastal concentrations of seabirds was also noted.

Night-time illumination levels were derived from a computer programme developed from work by Turton & Stone (1989).

Results

A total of 12 occasions on which deep depressions crossed the prescribed area occurred in the two decades, at least four of which could be directly related to previous tropical storms (i.e. extra-tropical depressions as opposed to the normal polar depressions, see table 1). Monthly totals were nil in August, four in September and eight in October. Less-powerful storms, related to deep but more-distant depressions, were noted on a further 12 occasions: one in August, two in September and nine in October. The stormiest autumn during the period was in 1993. The severe gales associated with the majority of these systems lasted less than 24 hours (table 1).

Table 1. Details of deep depressions (central pressure less than 985 hPa) crossing Biscay, Celtic Sea and western English Channel in August, September and October, 1977-96.

Entries in **bold** associated with Sabine’s Gulls *Larus sabini*.

D = polar depression; ET = extra-tropical depression.

E = England, FR = France, CI = Channel Islands.

As a rough guide, mean wind speed at time of gust $\cong \frac{2}{3}$ of gust speed.

Year	Date	Duration (days)	Type	Maximum gust (kph) in onshore winds	Country affected by onshore gales
1981	19th Sept	1	D	120 (E), 130 (FR)	E,FR
1982	13th Oct	1	D	115 (FR)	FR
1986	20th Oct	1	D	104 (CI)	E,FR
1987	15th Oct	1	D	180 (E), 158 (CI), 194 (FR)	E,FR
1989	28th Oct	1	D	162 (E)	E,FR
1991	28th Sept	1	D	133 (FR)	FR
1993	13th Sept	2	ET	159 (FR)	FR
1993	1st Oct	1	D	108 (FR)	FR
1993	5th Oct	1	D	100 (FR)	FR
1994	22nd Oct	1	D	< 100 (E,FR)	E,FR
1995	7th Sept	1	ET	148 (FR)	FR
1996	28th Oct	1	ET	130 (E)	E

Records associated with deep depressions

1983

A very deep depression moved northeast across western Ireland, with its associated westerly gales affecting the Southwest Approaches on 2nd September. Winds gusted to 120 kph, with 100 Sabine’s Gulls recorded at St Ives, Cornwall, on 3rd September (table 2). A further 200 or more were noted in Britain that autumn.

1987

This event, in which over 300 Sabine’s Gulls were recorded from 16th October, has been well documented (Hume & Christie 1989), and was the result of the infamous storm that devastated southern England, the Channel Islands and northern France (see fig. 1). While considerably smaller than some French influxes, it was remarkable in British terms, especially as the gulls moved far inland. The pattern of occurrence of Sabine’s Gulls (and of Grey

Table 2. Concentrations of 100 or more Sabine's Gulls *Larus sabini* ashore in Britain and France, 1977-96. Gale-related influxes are shown in bold.

Year	Date	Number	Site
1980	9th Sept	240	Les Sables d'Olonne, Vendée
1980	13th Sept	120-140	Les Sables d'Olonne
1983	3rd Sept	100	St Ives, Cornwall
1984	15th Sept	700+	Vilaine estuary, Morbihan
1984	16th Sept	1,220	Vilaine estuary
1984	7th Oct	100	Île Dumet, Morbihan
1985	11th Sept	130	Vilaine estuary
1985	13th Sept	600	Vilaine estuary
1987	11th Sept	250	Vilaine estuary
1987	16th-18th Oct	300+	S and E England
1993	13th-15th Sept	2,000+	W France
1995	7th Sept	850+	Les Sables d'Olonne
1995	11th Sept	150	Hoédic, Morbihan
1995	20th Sept	200	Vilaine estuary

Phalaropes *Phalaropus fulicarius* which were also displaced in unusual numbers) suggests, however, that the gales themselves were not the cause of displacement while the birds were at sea. Surface winds over Biscay around the depression were not particularly strong early on 15th October. The first reports of violent winds occurred off northwest Spain from midday, with these gales extending across Biscay and northwest France as the depression deepened to below 960 hPa and moved northeastwards. There was a distinct

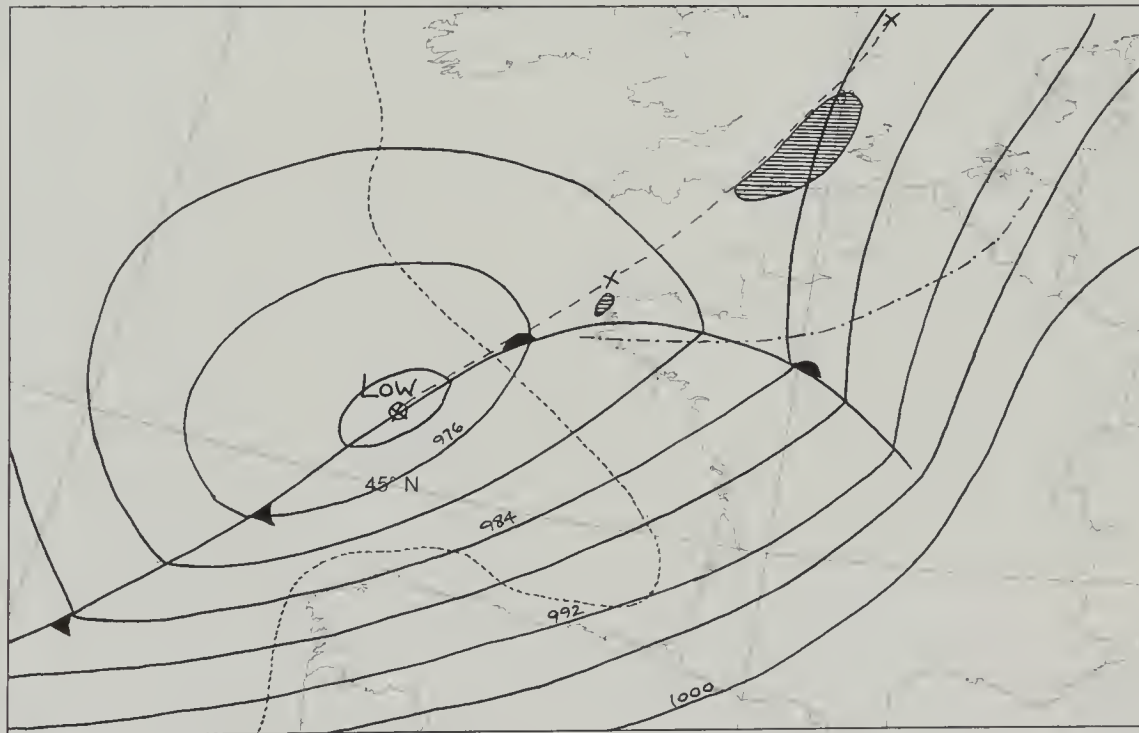


Fig. 1. Synoptic chart for 12.00 UT on 15th October 1987.
Dashed line = track of depression centre (× marks 12-hourly positions)
Horizontal shading = main areas of land-based records, 16th-17th Oct 1987
Dotted line = edge of continental shelf
Dotted-and-dashed line = southern limit of destructive gales

dearth of reports of Sabine's Gulls from France ('a few tens' were reported from the tip of Brittany, the only area in France close to the depression track). This suggested that they moved with the eye of the storm, remaining over the sea until the landfall of the depression centred on the Dorset coast early on 16th. It is likely that the gulls began to settle out over the coast and were overtaken by the very powerful west-to-southwest winds to the rear of the depression (gusting to 145 kph inland, and maintaining a steady 130 kph at an altitude of 500 m). These winds then carried them across southern and central England. The geographical distribution of observations on 16th and 17th (see figs. 1 & 2 in Fraser & Ryan 1994) showed a swathe of reports from Dorset to Essex and Cambridgeshire, corresponding almost exactly to the horizontal trajectory (not the direction) of the airflow during the first few hours from the gulls' landfall on 16th. This is supported by the paucity of records in the extreme southeast and southwest of England. The Southeast (East Sussex and Kent) was too far south to receive birds from Dorset, despite suffering winds as severe as other locations in southern England, and the Southwest was on the 'wrong' side of the depression. Observations on 16th from a southwest-bound vessel near Land's End revealed no Sabine's Gulls and relatively few other seabirds (W. R. P. Bourne *in litt.*), of which there were only small numbers inland in the days following the storm. The weekend's birdwatching activity on 17th and 18th coincided with the birds' return towards the Atlantic, with the vast majority having departed by 20th.

1993

This autumn saw the largest-ever coastal influx in Europe, when at least 2,000 Sabine's Gulls were reported on the French Atlantic coast between southern Brittany and the Gironde from 13th September (Desmots & Yésou 1994). Ex-hurricane 'Floyd', reinvigorated as an extra-tropical depression, passed slowly east into Brittany on 13th with a central pressure of 968 hPa (fig. 2). Winds gusted to 159 kph at Belle-Île, but, as the depression moved along the Channel Coast of northern France, filling slowly, the severe westerly gales veered northwest and abated. In Vendée, at least 1,600 Sabine's Gulls were counted on the afternoon of 13th, with 800 in the vicinity of les Sables d'Olonne alone, and several occurred well inland during the next few days. Only 130 Sabine's Gulls were recorded in Britain during the whole season between mid August and early October. Unlike the 1987 event, it appears that the birds were drifted in the prolonged gales rather than moving in the eye of the storm. No gale-induced Sabine's Gull influx of any size had been recorded in France since September 1930, when westerly gales associated with a deep polar depression over Britain carried large numbers onto the Atlantic coast, particularly in Gironde (Mayaud 1931).

1995

This meteorological situation was almost a mirror image of that in 1993. The dying hurricane 'Iris' was reinvigorated into a rapidly deepening depression on 6th September, passing north of Brittany on 7th with a central pressure of less



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than 972 hPa. It moved up the English Channel, weakening steadily, with severe southwest-to-west gales battering western France. A wind speed of 148 kph was recorded at the tip of Brittany. Most of the sightings were from Vendée, where over 850 Sabine's Gulls were counted at Les Sables d'Olonne on 7th. These birds arrived around midday, at the height of the storm, and reached a peak in the evening. A rapid decrease in the wind overnight allowed all but a few to return to sea. Sabine's Gulls were also reported from other sites, especially in Morbihan (Desmots & Yésou 1996). Again, few were recorded in Britain from this storm.

During the period under review, there were a number of deep depressions west of the area that gave rise to severe south-to-southwesterly gales. This would theoretically drift any seabirds in northern Biscay onto the south-facing coasts of Ireland or Cornwall. Five such events were noted, but on no occasion was any increase of Sabine's Gulls reported from coastal waters.

Outwith the period of this study, on 29th August 1997, a remarkable northwestward coastal passage was recorded at Les Sables d'Olonne into a strong WNW airstream associated with a deep depression over Britain. The strength of the winds was not particularly notable, gusting to 97 kph on Ouessant on 28th, and backing southwest on 29th in the circulation of a wave depression. The movement, which was estimated to be of several hundred on 28th and 29th, appeared to be more of a concentrated 'fly-by', perhaps of birds newly arrived in Biscay. Preliminary reports reveal that this autumn produced almost 1,000 Sabine's Gulls off Ireland, with 347 off Co. Kerry on 29th August in light winds, suggesting that huge numbers must have been present in the region. Unusually high numbers were also noted in the North Sea in September, with passage through the Strait of Dover in October. Displacement by gales around northern Scotland seems likely to have occurred, in a manner similar to that of other pelagic seabirds.

Discussion

The small numbers of Sabine's Gulls (no more than 25 at any one time) that occur in southwest England and southern Ireland are often associated with strong westerly or northwesterly winds. Most of these are 'fly-bys' of migrants. The 1982 storm did produce 30 or more near Les Sables d'Olonne, an unpublished record that recently came to light from a non-ornithological source (J. Moreau verbally). The events at sea and on the French coast in 1977, 1980, 1984, 1985, 1987, 1988 and 1989 (tables 2 & 3) were notable, however, in that they were not associated with any particularly strong winds. Indeed, many occurred during light winds of varying directions, often near ridges of high pressure. Some records were of Sabine's Gulls roosting ashore, suggesting that flocks may sometimes feed nearer the coast than is generally believed (see Desmots & Yésou 1994). As southerly gales bring no coastal flocks to Britain or Ireland, most would appear to be concentrated off the French coast south of Brittany.

Bourne (1986) identified a seabird concentration (Great Shearwaters *Puffinus gravis*, Sooty Shearwaters *P. griseus*, Manx Shearwaters *P. puffinus*,



▲ 100. Sabine's Gull *Larus sabini*, France, August 1997 (*Frédéric Jiguet*). The grey neck patch behind the black collar, the retained black-tipped tail feather, and the much-abraded white primary tips are indicative of first-summer plumage; it is uncommon for the grey hood to be so extensively developed at this age, and such an individual could easily be taken for a moulting adult when seen in normal seawatching conditions.

▼ 101. Adult Sabine's Gull *Larus sabini*, France, August 1997 (*Frédéric Jiguet*)



Northern Gannets *Morus bassanus* and occasional passing Grey Phalaropes) in late summer south of Brittany. The area concerned is along the 'shelfbreak front', a persistent line of upwelling created by a deep current impinging on the edge of the continental shelf. Although there have been no records of large numbers of Sabine's Gulls in this area, French ornithologists have found that in coastal waters (up to 55 km from the coast) the frequency of Sabine's Gulls from late August to mid October usually varies from 0.2 to 1.4 birds per hour at sea in central and northern Biscay (Yésou 1993; Recorbet 1996). Higher densities occur south and west of this area in mid Biscay over the continental shelf between 45°N and 46°30'N (A. Bertrand verbally; Burneleau & Dubois 1985; G. Hémery in Recorbet 1996; PY pers. obs.). Over ten Sabine's Gulls per hour have been regularly observed at sea in the area known as Rochebonne, 55 km west of La Rochelle, and farther south, with the highest numbers recorded in the 1980s (fig. 2 & table 3). The lack of three-figure records in the 1990s probably reflects the scarcity of pelagic trips to the right places, rather than decreasing densities.

The 1980 influx in French coastal waters involved a total of about 500 Sabine's Gulls recorded in daily observations near Les Sables d'Olonne during 5th-18th September (see table 2). The area affected is usually characterised by cold coastal water, leading to thermal oceanographic fronts favourable to feeding Balearic Shearwaters *Puffinus mauretanicus* (Le Mao & Yésou 1993). During the summer of 1980, however, warmer water from southern Biscay invaded the area (Yésou 1982). Although there is no proof that this can explain the influx of Sabine's Gulls, a relationship is suggested by events in the Vilaine estuary, where phytoplanktonic blooms linked to warm water have occurred simultaneously with high Sabine's Gull numbers. For example, such a massive bloom appeared in the Vilaine estuary in 1984. Recorbet (1996) suggested that the presence of numerous Sabine's Gulls (see table 2) was linked to that bloom, although there is no direct proof of such a linkage (e.g. the end of the bloom was characterised by an abundance of toxic algae, theoretically detrimental to most living organisms). Blooms still occur there almost annually, while associated large numbers of Sabine's Gulls have not recurred in the last ten years. Any connection between the abundance of Sabine's Gulls and oceanographic parameters cannot be certain owing to the lack of information on the gulls' food and its distribution.

The sequence of meteorological events leading up to the influxes of 1987, 1993 and 1995 correlates very well with such concentrations noted in Biscay. Innumerable voyages by members of the Royal Naval Birdwatching Society and others have never found anything other than passing Sabine's Gulls along the shipping routes (W. R. P. Bourne *in litt.*), but these routes are well away from coastal waters and the regions of upwelling along the 'shelfbreak front'.

Figs. 1 & 2 (pages 389 & 394) show the tracks and positions of the depressions during the largest English and French influxes, as well as the areas in which the majority of Sabine's Gulls were observed immediately after the strongest gales. In 1987 (fig. 1), the distribution of the gulls mirrored the track of the depression, and hardly affected France, lending credibility to the suggestion that their initial movement was in the eye of the depression, with

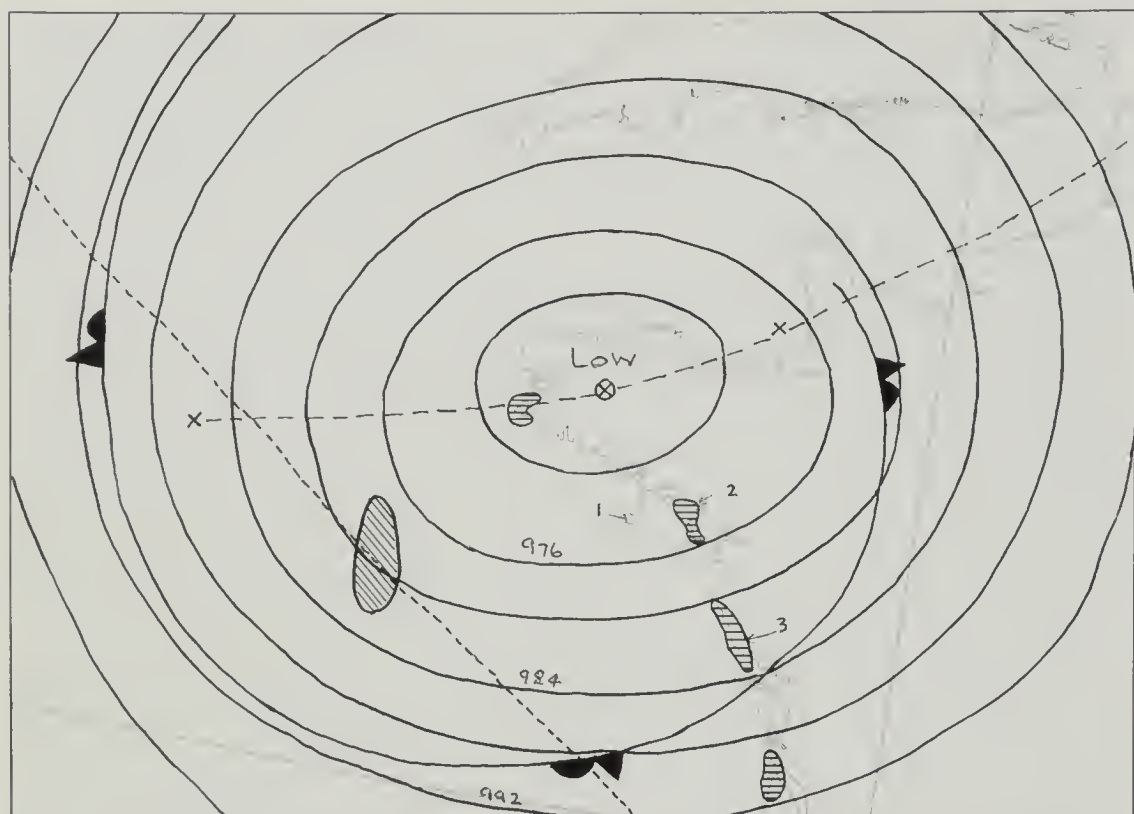


Fig. 2. Synoptic chart for 06.00 UT on 13th September 1993.

Dashed line = track of depression centre (x marks midday positions), 12th-13th Sept 1993

Horizontal shading = main areas of land-based records, 13th-14th Sept 1993

Dotted line = edge of continental shelf

1, 2, 3 = locations of Belle-Île, Vilaine estuary and Les Sables d'Olonne respectively

Angled shading = area of recently observed offshore concentrations

Table 3. Records of over 100 Sabine's Gulls *Larus sabini* off the French coast, 1977-96 (from Burneleau & Dubois 1985; A. Bertrand & P.-P. Évrard *in litt.*; PY pers. obs.)

Year	Date	Number	Site
1977	6th Sept	150	off Île d'Oleron, Charente-Maritime
1980	29th-30th Aug	2,000	55-90 km off Charente-Maritime & Gironde
1980	17th Sept	854	75-90 km off Charente-Maritime
1988	31st Aug	144+	35-55 km off Vendée
1989	24th Sept	200	35-55 km off Vendée

dispersal inland afterwards being suddenly overtaken by the hurricane-force winds. This inland penetration was unprecedented. It is possible that the sudden change in their atmospheric environment as they attempted to stop at the coast took them unawares during the hours of darkness. They would have experienced a sudden transition from relative calm in the eye of the storm to the violent winds on its southern flank. Taking into account the date, time of day, cloud cover and moon phase, the light level was only 2 millilux at landfall (with sunrise 3½ hours later). This equates to the amount of light available on a moonless but starlit night, to which must be added a little 'cultural' lighting from any towns. Although the gulls would initially have been aware that they were over land, the effect of the minimal illumination would have been negated by the violent winds. They would, therefore, have been swept inland where they

later located such suitable resting places as reservoirs. In contrast, those in the 1993 event (fig. 2) were already weathering the gales while at sea, and therefore stopped when they reached the coast. PY recorded some tens of Sabine's Gulls, accompanied by other pelagic species, moving *westwards* into the gale over the hinterland near Les Sables d'Olonne in the early morning of 13th September. This suggests the likelihood of a similar nocturnal inland displacement, during what was an even darker night (0.4 millilux). Coastal records were widespread, attesting to the extent of onshore gales. Fig. 2 also shows the sea area in which French ornithologists have located a considerable concentration of gulls in late summer. Comparison of the two synoptic situations and the pattern of records suggests that in 1993 the gulls were widely distributed in eastern Biscay, while in 1987 the origin of the gulls may have been much more concentrated, possibly over the shelf west of Brittany. With the 4½-week difference in timing between the two events, differences in location would be expected, and annual variations in population and feeding areas would be superimposed on these.

The birds' apparent lack of exhaustion highlights the fact that their involvement with the storm systems is confined to a very short time-scale. In both 1987 and 1995, this was less than 24 hours. Thus, Sabine's Gull influxes cannot be compared with wrecks of seabirds in the accepted sense since, being an oceanic species, they seem physically able to tolerate such conditions. Table 2 shows that most French records occur from late August to mid September, coinciding with the autumnal peak of the species in Britain (Dymond *et al.* 1989), so the 1987 influx was particularly late. Only in 1984 and 1987 were October influxes recorded, although 1996 brought a few. There were no significant Sabine's Gull records in the storms of 1986, 1989 and 1994 (see table 1), which all occurred in late October, after the bulk of Sabine's Gulls have departed from Biscay.

Relationship of other seabirds with Sabine's Gulls and with similar storms

The association with Grey Phalaropes on several occasions may reflect the rather similar migration patterns of the two species, although many phalarope influxes have occurred without any accompanying Sabine's Gulls. A small influx of phalaropes into Britain in late September 1957 (Sage & King 1959) took place during the passage east off southwest Ireland of a deep depression originating from hurricane 'Carrie'. This depression was at its most intense approximately 1,000 km southwest of Cape Clear, Co. Cork, and generated severe gales over the western Bay of Biscay. The authors postulated, however, that the phalaropes had been swept along in the eye of the storm (similar to the 1987 Sabine's Gull event, although clearly from a more westerly origin). Indeed, it is well known that seabirds often travel in the calm centres of tropical storms, occasionally being deposited inland and/or well outside their normal range (Elkins 1995). Another phalarope invasion occurred in autumn 1960, involving over 7,000 reported, mainly off southwest Ireland and southwest England (Ferguson-Lees & Williamson 1960); 21 years later, an estimated 1,000 occurred off Île d'Ouessant after a fast-moving wave depression crossed the area on 9th-10th October 1981. These events brought hardly any Sabine's Gulls. An influx of Sabine's Gulls in northwest France in

late September 1965 (on moderate southwesterly winds) was, however, associated with Grey Phalaropes (Ricard 1966). Leach's Storm-petrels *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* appeared in rather small numbers in 1987, but were somewhat more abundant in 1993. In the latter storm, hundreds of European Storm-petrels *Hydrobates pelagicus* were recorded, especially off Brittany. Skuas *Stercorarius/Catharacta* appeared in small numbers in both storms, but it would seem that the speed and track of the depressions described precluded the involvement of many of the pelagic seabird species which, at this time of the year, frequent waters farther out in the North Atlantic.

Age of the birds

Almost all the Sabine's Gulls in 1983, and 76% in 1987, were aged as adults. In 1993, the proportion of first-years was only 6%, and a sample in 1995 revealed 12% to be first-years. Similar low proportions of first-year birds were reported in the 1930 influx (10-12%: Mayaud 1931) and in the 1989 record in table 3 (7-10%). In the decade 1958-67, Sharrock (1971) showed that most Sabine's Gulls recorded in Britain and Ireland before mid September and after mid October seemed to be adults, while immatures predominated between these periods. The samples were, however, very small, and, as no major influxes occurred in his period of study, this pattern should be treated with caution. In addition, conditions often do not allow observers to distinguish between first-summer birds and full adults, especially those in moult. Age data must, therefore, be considered with care, as knowledge of moult and age-related plumages was in its infancy until the late 1970s. The subject has recently been addressed fully by Yésou (1997).

Acknowledgments

We wish to thank all the seabird enthusiasts on both sides of the Channel for gathering the data. They are too numerous to mention, but their efforts are no less appreciated. We are also indebted to Didier Desmots, for assistance in gathering data over many years, and to Dr Bill Bourne and Rob Hume for their helpful comments, and for assistance with references and additional information. Special thanks are due to those French observers who contributed unpublished data, among them Alain Bertrand, Jean Chevallier, Philippe Dubois, Pierre-Paul Évrard and Jean-Philippe Siblet.

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LOOKING BACK

Fifty years ago: 'THE BLACK REDSTART INQUIRY FOR 1947 . . . has yielded evidence for at least fifteen pairs of Black Redstarts (*Phoenicurus ochruros gibraltariensis*) breeding in south-east England in 1947, again in the counties of Sussex, Kent and Middlesex. In addition four other pairs were present, without breeding being proved, and some nine other singing males were located. [R. S. R. FITTER]' (*Brit. Birds* 41: 267, September 1948)



NEWS AND COMMENT

Compiled by Bob Scott and Wendy Dickson

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

Farmers, take note

Mention the words 'chemical spray' and environmentalists' hackles rise instantly. DDT, Aldrin, Dieldrin and the like have created distrust between conservationists, including birdwatchers, and the agrochemical industry and agriculturalists, including farmers.

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This BTO research was funded by Zeneca Agrochemicals, and the BTO has commented that it hopes 'that farmers will take note of these results'.

'The Birds of Hauxley'

Situated at the north end of Druridge Bay in Northumberland lies Hauxley, protruding significantly into the North Sea, and home of the Northumbria Ringing Group's Hauxley Ringing Station alongside the Northumberland Wildlife Trust's 22-ha Hauxley Reserve. *The Birds of Hauxley* by Ian Fisher and Sandy Bankier has just been published, summarising the results of the past 35 years' of ringing. Sadly, Sandy Bankier did not live to see the finished product, which is now dedicated to his memory.

This A4-size ring-binder publication will appeal not only to local people, but also to the much wider audience of anyone who has ever visited the area. If you would like a copy, send a cheque for £4.00, which includes p&p, payable to Ian Fisher, at 74 Benton Park Road, Newcastle upon Tyne NE7 7NB. All profits go to the Ringing Station.

Britain's first Citrine Wagtail

In January 1998, members of the Shetland Bird Club assembled in the County Museum and examined specimens obtained by the late Sammy Bruee, who 'collected' in Shetland from the 1910s to the early 1950s. In that time, he added one species to the British List and at least one to the Scottish List, both in 1947: Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis* on 11th May and Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus* on 7th October.

Thanks to the eagle-eyed Pete Ellis, the BOU Records Committee now needs to make its usual meticulous assessments of a possible third 'first': a skin—labelled 'Blue-headed Wagtail' [*Motacilla flava flava*] and dated, in a barely legible scrawl, '193-'—was actually a Citrine Wagtail *M. citreola*, which predates the currently accepted first (on Fair Isle in September 1954). This extraordinary club meeting is described in the *Shetland Bird Club Newsletter* (112: 2).

First peatbog for Plantlife

Plantlife has launched a major appeal for £200,000 to buy its first peatbog and nature reserve in Scotland: the 1,350-ha Munsary Peatlands, one of Europe's last remaining botanical wildernesses, in the Flow Country of Caithness. Part of an SSSI and a candidate Special Area of Conservation under the EC Habitats Directive, it may well also qualify as a Special Protection Area for birds and a Ramsar Wetland of International Importance. One of Plantlife's first tasks will be to block off the major drains in the reserve to return the peat to its full wetness. To contribute to this purchase, send your donation to Plantlife, FREEPOST, The Natural History Museum, London SW7 5YZ.

Two Max Planck research centres

It is good news that the ornithological research of the Max Planck Institute for Behavioural Physiology, due to close on 30th November 1999, will continue at two centres: under Prof. Eberhard Gwinner at Andechs, near Munich, and under Prof. Peter Berthold at the Radolfzell Ornithological Station on Lake Constance. The work by Prof. Gwinner's team on biological rhythms and by Prof. Berthold's team on bird migration was critically assessed by a team of international scientists, which concluded with an 'impressively positive vote for the continuation of ornithological research in the Max Planck Society.'

Slender-billed Curlew news

BirdLife International maintains a database of all records of Slender-billed Curlew *Numenius tenuirostris*, as an essential part of its efforts to conserve this globally threatened species. Please send any information to Dr Nic Peet or Zoltan Waliczky, BirdLife International, Wellbrook Court, Girton Road, Cambridge CB3 0NA; phone 01223 277318; e-mail nic.peet@birdlife.org.uk

A 12-man expedition, organised jointly by Glasgow University and the Kazakhstan Institute of Zoology, sponsored by a dozen organisations, and supported by the Animal Health Business Group of the commercial company Bayer, is searching for the breeding grounds of Slender-billed Curlews in the Kustani, Petropavlovsk and Pavlodar regions in northern Kazakhstan during 20th July to 30th September.

'Bird Watcher's Digest'

Into vol. 20 and still going strong is *Bird Watcher's Digest*, with style and general format reminiscent of *Reader's Digest*, but compiled for birders. Its contents are largely North American in origin, but its editorial team trawls the World's ornithological literature, so snippets from *BB* appear now and again.

The Editor is William H. Thompson III, and subscription details can be obtained from PO Box 110, Marietta, Ohio 45750, USA.

The last Wildlife Photographer

We are sorry to have noted the demise of the occasional magazine *The Wildlife Photographer*, published by Aquila Photographics and edited by first-ever BPY winner, Mike Wilkes. The editorial of the 1998 special edition notes that 'Without the power of a big publishing house behind such a venture it has proved impossible to produce a viable magazine on a regular basis. Despite all the accolades that have been heaped on us and all the encouraging letters received at this office it does not, I am afraid, make commercial sense to continue.' Mike Wilkes does, however, 'nurture a faint hope that one day, like the Phoenix, it will rise again!', a sentiment echoed, we feel sure, by very many bird-photographers.

Middle East co-operation

Under the headline 'Migrating birds are carrying the message of peace in the Middle East' comes the announcement that USAID/MERC has committed over \$1 million to co-operative work for migrating birds by Israeli, Jordanian and Palestinian conservation bodies. The Israeli 'International Center for the Study of Bird Migration', the Jordanian 'Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature' and the Palestinian 'Children for the Protection of Nature' will each receive \$350,000.

The announcement carried a symbolic photograph showing Dr Sultan Sufian, Minister of the Environment of the Palestinian Authority, and Dr Yossi Leshem, founder of the International Center, jointly releasing a ringed Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* back into the wild. (Information supplied by John Barclay)

Raptor migration at Gibraltar

The Gibraltar Ornithological & Natural History Society (GONHS) is continuing its programme to monitor migration over the Strait of Gibraltar.

Volunteers are needed to assist, mainly in covering bird of prey passage between July and November and again during February to June. Accommodation is available at the Upper Rock Nature Reserve, within easy reach of the observation points. There are also opportunities for bird-ringing and seabird-watching, and all the benefits of an English-speaking territory in a sterling area.

Anyone interested should contact the Strait of Gibraltar Bird Observatory, GONHS, PO Box 843, Gibraltar; tel (350) 72639; fax (350) 74022; e-mail gonhs@gibnet.gi

EN purchases Shapwick Heath NNR

English Nature has gained £199,695 from the Heritage Lottery Fund to secure the freehold of 114 ha of prime conservation land at Shapwick Heath in Somerset, which will consolidate EN's holding at this site.

The area includes orchid-rich, traditionally managed hay meadows, ferny wet woodland, ditches with rare diving beetles, and a remnant of the sphagnum-moss mire which once covered the valley floor. The oldest known neolithic wooden trackway, the 'Sweet Track', is also preserved within the Reserve.

'Atlas of Public Forests'

Congratulations to the Ramblers' Association on the publication of the second edition of *Ramblers' Atlas of Public Forests showing land in England, Scotland and Wales held by the Forestry Commission*. The compilation was undertaken with the assistance of Forest Enterprise and clearly indicates the range of facilities available to visitors: the location of car parks, information centres and toilets in the forests—all handy information to the travelling birder. The Ramblers' Association, 1-5 Wandsworth Road, London SW8 2XX.

Ernest Ian Appleyard (1923-1998)

Ian Appleyard, perhaps best known to fellow *BB* subscribers as author of *Ring Ouzels of the Yorkshire Dales* (1994, reviewed *Brit. Birds* 87: 632), was even better known as a successful athlete and rally driver than as an ornithologist. He represented Britain at skiing in the 1948 Olympics and took part in the 2,000-mile Alpine Rally, winning the Alpine Cup five times, including in three consecutive years (1950-52).

Ian's interest in ornithology started in his childhood in the Yorkshire Dales. In his studies of Ring Ouzels *Turdus torquatus* during 1978-93, he and his wife, Philippa, located over 350 nesting pairs. Ian died, in Harrogate, on 2nd June.


A full obituary was published by *The Independent* on 16th June.

Tuna on RSPB reserves

Regular visitors to some of the most popular RSPB reserves will not have missed the arrival of tea-rooms and serveries. On a cold wet day, they are particularly welcome. Conservation-minded reserve visitors have not been slow to notice that tuna (usually as fillings in sandwiches and rolls) has appeared on the menus and have queried its origin in the light of worldwide marine conservation problems that tuna fishing has produced. The RSPB has stated: 'The tuna that is served at [this reserve] comes from a dolphin and albatross friendly fishery. The skipjack tuna we use is caught by hand-held pole and line in regions of tropical seas which include some of the world's better managed and thus more sustainable fisheries. This method of fishing avoids the

death of scavenging seabirds caught by long lines of baited hooks, a method of fishing which is decimating some of the long lived and slow breeding albatross populations of the southern oceans, which get caught on the hooks when scavenging. It also avoids the death of dolphins in monofilament nets which are used to catch other types of tuna. When you buy tuna you can help to conserve dolphins and albatrosses by buying skipjack tuna where possible. Check that the can is labelled dolphin friendly. Avoid buying bluefin tuna (which you may come across especially when abroad) which is not only becoming a rare fish due to over-fishing but also may well have been caught at the expense of the seabirds of the southern ocean.'

New BBRC member

 Nominations will be welcomed for the vacancy which will occur on the British Birds Rarities Committee when the longest-serving member, Pete Ellis, retires on 1st April 1999. The Committee's nomination is Adam Rowlands, who lives in Kent (no current member of the BBRC lives in Southeast England).

Candidates must have a proven ability in the field; a wide experience of rare birds; experience of record assessment; knowledge of the national rarities 'scene'; an ability to deal with paperwork efficiently and effectively; and the time required to deal with the Rarities Committee workload (which varies from a couple of hours in some weeks, up to ten hours in others).

The election will involve voting by each County Recorder and local Records Committee (five votes per county) and each official Bird Observatory Warden and Records Committee (two votes per observatory).

Nominations, with the names and addresses of two supporters, should be sent to Prof. Colin Bradshaw, 9 Tynemouth Place, Tynemouth, Tyne & Wear NE30 4BJ.

Change of address

The RSPB's Scottish Headquarters has a new address: Dunedin House, 25 Ravelston Terrace, Edinburgh EH4 3TP; tel. 0131-311-6500; fax. 0131-311-6569.

Rose, Peregrine and Wildwood

One of the most stunning pictures at The Society of Wildlife Artists 35th Annual Exhibition at the Mall Galleries was an oil-painting of a Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* by Chris Rose, entitled 'Carrifran lookout—Peregrine on Raven Crag' and marked 'NFS'.

'Not for sale' because it is being auctioned to raise funds for the Carrifran Wildwood Project. The aim is to restore 600 ha of the wildwood in the Southern Uplands of Scotland, from seeds collected locally, with the spectrum of the re-established flora based on evidence from peat borings.

The top bid at present is £3,250, but *you* can put in your postal or fax bid by contacting Fiona Martynoga (Carrifran Wildwood, Kirkbride House, Traquair, Scottish Borders EH44 6PU; fax: 01896 830361), before 5.00 p.m. on 23rd November 1998.

For more details about the Carrifran Woodland Project, contact the Borders Forest Trust, Monteviot Nurseries, Ancrum, Jedburgh, Scotland TD8 6TU.

Rare breeding birds

Observers with information on rare breeding birds in Britain in 1998 are requested to send full details now to the relevant county bird recorder (or to the Rare Breeding Birds Panel's Secretary, Dr Malcolm Ogilvie, Glencairn, Bruichladdich, Isle of Islay PA49 7UN). *Please do not wait until the end of the year.*



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RECENT BBRC DECISIONS



This monthly listing of the most-recent decisions by the British Birds Rarities Committee is not intended to be comprehensive or in any way to replace the annual 'Report on rare birds in Great Britain'. The records listed are mostly those of the rarest species, or those of special interest for other reasons. All records refer to 1997 unless stated otherwise.

ACCEPTED: **Wilson's Storm-petrel** *Oceanites oceanicus* At sea, sea area Sole, 11.3 km SW of St Agnes (Scilly), 24th August. **White-tailed Eagle** *Haliaeetus albicilla* Chelford (Cheshire), 28th October. **Broad-billed Sandpiper** *Limicola falcinellus* Cliffe (Kent), 31st May. **Brünnich's Guillemot** *Uria lomvia* Fetlar (Shetland), 26th-30th December. **Little Swift** *Apus affinis* Brading Marsh area (Isle of Wight), 5th-6th May. **European Roller** *Coracias garrulus* New Forest (Hampshire), 25th May. **Olive-backed Pipit** *Anthus hodgsoni* Tresco (Scilly), 23rd October. **Red-throated Pipit** *A. cervinus* Dungeness (Kent), 19th October. **Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola* Sumburgh (Shetland), 21st August; St Agnes, 5th September; North Ronaldsay (Orkney), 26th-28th September; North Ronaldsay, 28th September. **Desert Wheatear** *Oenanthe deserti* Girdleness (Northeast Scotland), 7th November; Holy Island (Northumberland), 20th & 30th November; Bamburgh (Northumberland), 10th-15th December. **Dark-throated Thrush** *Turdus ruficollis* of race *atrogularis* Fetlar, 8th October; Bressay (Shetland), 10th October. **Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler** *Locustella certhiola* Sumburgh, 27th September; Kergord (Shetland), 28th-30th September.

M. J. Rogers, Secretary, BBRC, 2 Churchtown Cottages, Towednack, St Ives, Cornwall TR26 3AZ



RECENT REPORTS

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary covers the period from 20th July to 16th August 1998. These are unchecked reports, not authenticated records.

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* Holywell Pond (Northumberland), 8th August; Ventnor (Isle of Wight), 10th August; Covehithe and Southwold area (Suffolk), 12th-16th August. **Sora Crane** *Porzana carolina* Adult, Tacumshin (Co. Wexford), 2nd-4th August. **Semipalmated Sandpiper** *Calidris pusilla*

Adult, RSPB Reserve, Belfast Harbour Estate (Co. Down), 13th-16th August. **Gull-billed Tern** *Sterna nilotica* Courtmacsherry (Co. Cork), 26th-30th July. **Western Bonelli's Warbler** *Phylloscopus bonelli* Near Plymstock (Devon), 9th-12th August.



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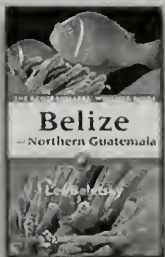
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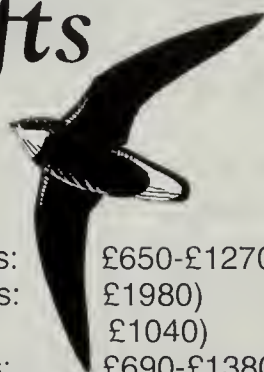
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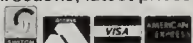
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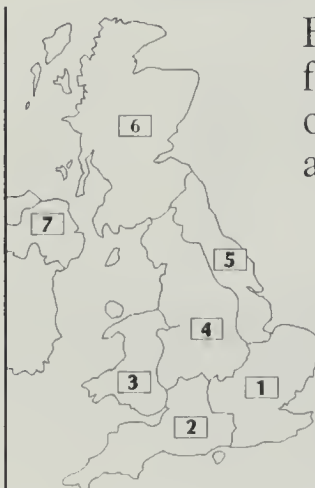
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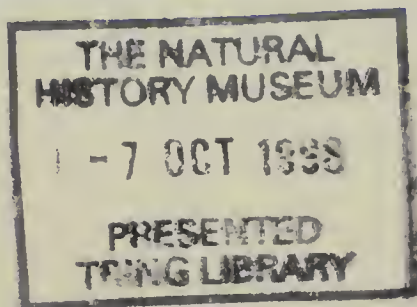
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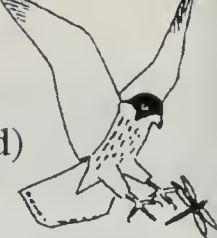
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Editorial

We are delighted to be able to announce that *British Birds* has entered a new and exciting phase.

In its 90-year history, *British Birds* has benefited from the sympathetic control of two ornithological publishers: its founding company, H. F. & G. Witherby Ltd, from 1907 to 1972, and then Macmillan Journals Ltd for the next eight years. In 1980, the Editorial Board acquired the journal, formed a new company, British Birds Ltd, and for the past 18 years has run it independently from any professional publisher.

Times change, however. Eighteen years ago, *BB* was the only monthly ornithological journal or magazine in the World. Now, there are four in Britain alone, and publications emulating *BB* have sprung up in several other European countries. British birdwatchers' horizons, too, have expanded enormously: two decades ago, most would never have made a trip beyond France or Spain, whereas nowadays a British birder is likely to have travelled at least to Asia or Africa as well as to eastern Europe or the Middle East. Technology has also evolved at a staggering rate, not least in the printing industry.

To take advantage of these exciting developments, we considered that the time had come, once again, for *BB* to benefit from the professional expertise of an ornithological publisher. The selection of an appropriate partner was given great thought, following advice from several senior ornithologists and large ornithological organisations in the UK.

Top of our list was Pica Press, a supporter of *BB* in numerous ways, including co-sponsorship (with T. & A. D. Poyser Ltd) of Bird Illustrator of the Year. Its Publisher, Christopher Helm, has been associated with specialist ornithological publishing for over 25 years, during which time books under his control have won Best Bird Book of the Year award on seven occasions. This link has now been established formally, and we are very pleased to report that *British Birds* is now published in alliance with Pica Press. We are confident that there will be long-term benefits to the journal itself, and therefore to its subscribers, from developing within the benevolent aegis of Pica Press. We already feel that we are part of an efficient, enthusiastic and happy family.

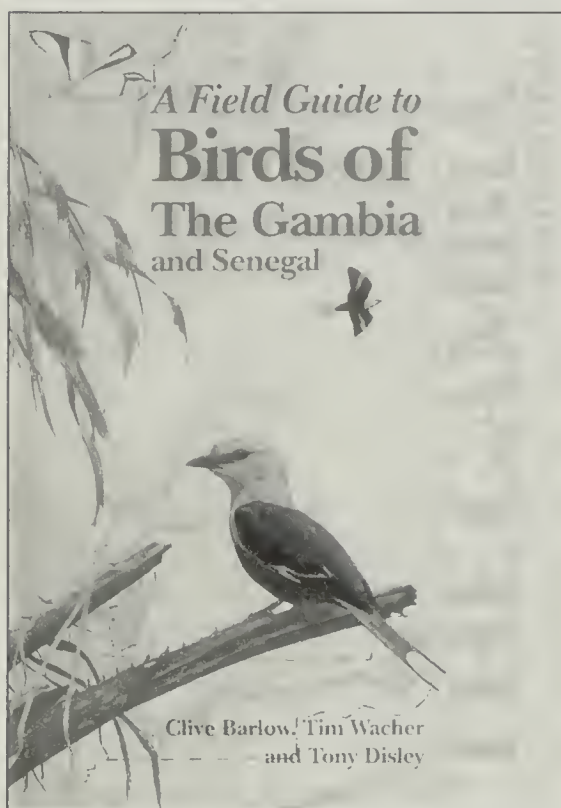
British Birds will continue to aim to serve British ornithology. So far as subscribers are concerned, it will be 'business as usual', with editorial independence assured; the Editorial Board and Notes Panels remaining in place; papers continuing to be refereed; and scientific content and accuracy continuing to be of paramount importance. We are confident that Pica Press will provide the solid base from which *British Birds* can develop and flourish. We trust that all our subscribers throughout the World will join us in celebrating the start of this new, exciting, fourth phase in the history of *BB*.

Administratively, a few changes will take place, and readers' attentions are drawn to the *new addresses and telephone numbers on page 448*.



The 'British Birds' Best Bird Book of the Year

For the benefit of those who may wish to acquire (or give as a present) just one of the many bird books published each year, *British Birds** selects annually its choice of the 'Best Bird Book of the Year' from those reviewed in the journal during the previous 12 months. The winner may, in one year, be an important, erudite scientific treatise and, in another, a lighter, less academic work, but it will always be reliable, well produced and thoroughly worthy of inclusion in any birdwatcher's library.



Our choice for
BEST BIRD BOOK OF 1998 is:

**A Field Guide to Birds of
the Gambia and Senegal**
By Clive Barlow & Tim Wachter
Illustrated by Tony Disley
Published by Pica Press,
Mountfield
£26.00
(Review: *Brit. Birds* 91: 333)

We also highly recommend the following
four runners-up:

*Handbook of the Birds of the World. vol. 4.
Sandgrouse to cuckoos* edited by Josep
del Hoyo, Andrew Elliott & Jordi
Sargatal. Published by Lynx Edicions,
Barcelona. £110.00. (Review: *Brit.
Birds* 91: 295-296)

Shrikes: a guide to the shrikes of the World by Norbert Lefranc & Tim Worfolk. Published
by Pica Press, Mountfield. £25.00. (Review: *Brit. Birds* 91: 65)

The EBCC Atlas of European Breeding Birds: their distribution and abundance edited by
Ward J. M. Hagemeijer & Michael J. Blair. Published by T. & A. D. Poyser, London.
£55.00. (Review: *Brit. Birds* 91: 254-255)

Birds: a guide book to British birds by Jonathan Elphick. Published by BBC Worldwide
Publishing, London. £14.99. (Review: *Brit. Birds* 90: 528)

*As usual, the selection was made by means of an independent vote by each member of the Editorial Board on a shortlist arrived at during preliminary assessments and discussions. Since one Board member (Nigel Redman) has very close associations with one publisher (Pica Press), he took no part in the selection process and cast no votes.



CONSERVATION RESEARCH NEWS

Compiled by Mark Avery



This feature, contributed by the RSPB's Research Department, reports the most interesting recent scientific news relevant to the conservation of Western Palearctic species.

Scoters take a dive

A census of Common Scoters *Melanitta nigra* in Britain and Ireland, carried out by the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust in 1995, has estimated the population at 100 pairs in the Republic of Ireland and 95 pairs in the United Kingdom. In the last 30 years, Common Scoters have ceased to breed in Northern Ireland, Shetland, Central Scotland and Dumfries & Galloway, and numbers have probably declined more recently in Caithness and Sutherland. The extinction of the breeding population on

Lower Lough Erne, which held an estimated 152 pairs in 1967, is particularly serious, even though some of these birds may have moved to other sites. The population decline, established in this census, has already led to the species being given priority by Government under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan: Common Scoter Species Action Plan was launched by the Environment Minister, Michael Meacher, in June 1998. (See also p. 427.)

UNDERHILL, M. C., GITTINGS, T., CALLAGHAN, D. A., HUGHES, B., KIRBY, J. S., & DELANEY, S. 1998. Status and distribution of breeding Common Scoters *Melanitta nigra* in Britain and Ireland in 1995. *Bird Study* 45: 146-156.

Magical increase by Merlins

National surveys and censuses are becoming more and more sophisticated. Graham Rebecca and Dr Ian Bainbridge, both of the RSPB, co-ordinated a national census of Merlins *Falco columbarius* in 1993 and 1994, which involved large numbers of Raptor Study Group and Upland Study Group members, as well as RSPB surveyors. This census included complete coverage of well-studied areas, with checks on accuracy, coupled with properly designed samples of other areas. The previous national census,

ten years earlier (*Brit. Birds* 79: 170-185), relied on less formal methods and estimated the population at 550-650 pairs. The recent census estimated 1,300 pairs of Merlins in Britain, give or take a couple of hundred. Is this a real increase or just an artefact of a change in methods? Thanks to the work of raptor enthusiasts between the two surveys, we know that the increase, or at least much of it, is a real one. Merlins appear genuinely to be increasing in many parts of the country.

REBECCA, G. W., & BAINBRIDGE, I. P. 1998. The breeding status of the Merlin *Falco columbarius* in Britain in 1993-94. *Bird Study* 45: 172-187.

Dutch Blackbird decline not so black and white

The decline in the population of the Blackbird *Turdus merula* in The Netherlands has been blamed on predation by Magpies *Pica pica*. This study tends to exonerate the Magpie, by showing that Blackbird nesting success actually increased during the period of

population decline. The study was based on numbers of young and adult birds captured by ringers in August rather than on information on actual nesting attempts. The focus of research on identifying the causes of decline of Blackbirds should thus switch to survival instead of productivity.

DIX, M. J., MUSTERS, K. J. M., & TER KEURS, W. J. 1998. Is the Blackbird *Turdus merula* declining in The Netherlands because of lower breeding success? *Bird Study* 45: 247-250.

Dr Mark Avery, Research Department, RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL



THE CARL ZEISS AWARD



Every year, *Carl Zeiss Ltd*, the sponsors of the British Birds Rarities Committee, presents The Carl Zeiss Award to the photographer who has provided the most instructive or useful print or transparency as part of the documentation of a record of a rare bird in Britain during the previous year. The aim is to encourage the submission of documentary photographs, to assist the Committee in its deliberations.

A total of 557 photographs of 1997 rarities had been submitted, many (indeed, most) of very high quality photographically. Three sets of photographs stood out, however, as particularly interesting: (1) a series of photographs of the Dawlish Warren Semipalmated Plover *Charadrius semipalmatus*, by Dr Iain H. Leach, (2) two of an Ivory Gull *Pagophila eburnea*, taken by (then) 12-year-old Iain Landsman, one of which showed the underwing pattern, and (3) two of the Isle of Wight Little Swift *Apus affinis*, taken by Martin Hunnybun, a species not easy to capture on film in flight, yet showing precisely the extent of white on the rump and the wing-shape and tail-shape. The Little Swift photographs (plates 102 & 103) were selected by the judges for The Carl Zeiss Award, with Iain Landsman's Ivory Gull (plates 104 & 105) a very close second, and Dr Iain Leach's Semipalmated Plover photographs (plates 106-109) in third place.

As his prize, Martin Hunnybun can choose between *Zeiss* 10 × 40 and *Zeiss* 7 × 42 binoculars. In this special instance, to encourage younger bird-photographers, *Carl Zeiss Ltd* has generously made an extra award, of *Zeiss* 8 × 30 BMC binoculars, to Iain Landsman.

R. A. HUME and J. T. R. SHARROCK

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▲ 102 & 103. Winner of THE CARL ZEISS AWARD: Little Swift *Apus affinis*, Foreland, Isle of Wight, 5th May 1997 (Martin Hunnybun)



▲▼ 104 & 105. Second in THE CARL ZEISS AWARD: first-winter Ivory Gull *Pagophila eburnea*, Kinnairds Head, Northeast Scotland, 24th/25th October 1997 (Iain Landsman)



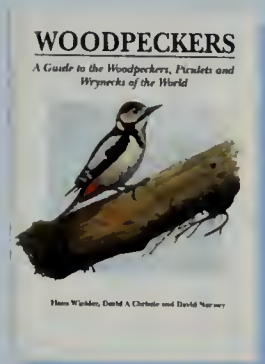


▲◀▼ 106-109. Third in THE CARL ZEISS AWARD: first-summer Semipalmated Plover *Charadrius semipalmatus* (top, with Great Ringed Plover *C. hiaticula*), Devon, June 1997 (Iain H. Leach)

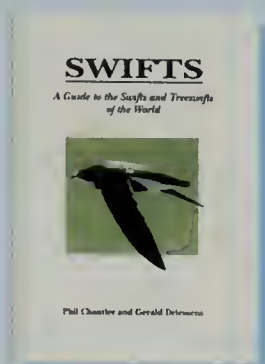


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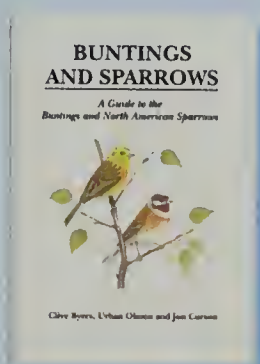
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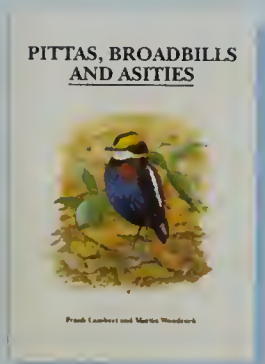
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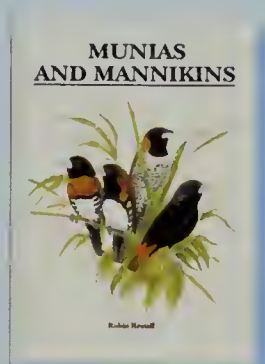
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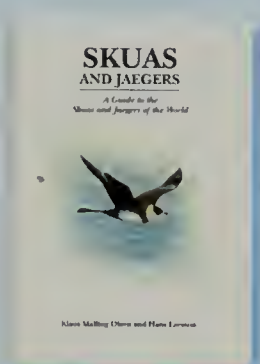
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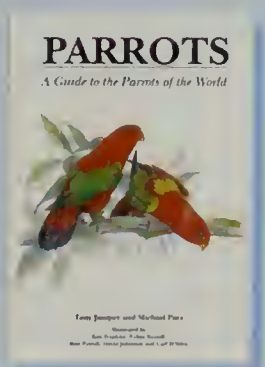
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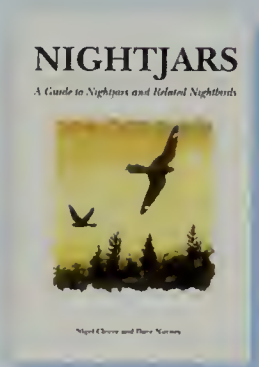
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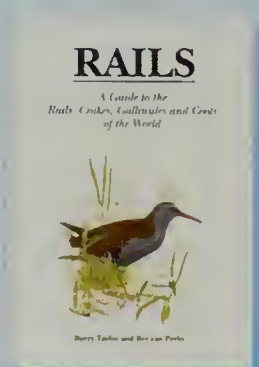
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Resurgence of Egyptian Vultures in western Pyrénées, and relationship with Griffon Vultures

Jacques Carlon

This paper is dedicated to the memory of Bernard Braillon, who died on 26th December 1986, in recognition of his pioneering work on this species on the northern slopes of the Pyrénées.

ABSTRACT A long-term study of Egyptian Vultures *Neophron percnopterus* in southwest France showed a marked population recovery from 1985, the species having declined greatly during the previous decade and more. This resurgence was due in part to improved weather during critical periods of the breeding cycle, and also reflected improvements in the fortunes of the Spanish population. The species' relationship with the Griffon Vulture *Gyps fulvus* was also studied, and its response to nest-site usurpation by the larger vulture showed interesting adaptations.

Our observations on Egyptian Vultures *Neophron percnopterus* were carried out in the province of Béarn, in the eastern half of the département of Pyrénées-Atlantiques, situated on the northern slope of the Pyrénées in southwest France (see Carlon 1996b). The study area comprised the valleys of the rivers Barétous, Aspe, Ossau and Ouzom, all in the southern half of the province and covering an area of approximately 860 km².

During the 12 years 1984-95, a total of 2,366 hours of field observations was made by the author, with an additional 330 hours by colleagues. Altogether, 205 pairs of Egyptian Vultures were monitored at breeding sites over the 12 years, plus ten pairs in 1982 and 1983: making 215 pairs in all.

Various findings of this study have already been published in French (Carlton 1989, 1992, 1993, 1996a). The present paper presents a summary in English of the remarkable resurgence of the species in Béarn, together with interesting aspects of its relationship with the Griffon Vulture *Gyps fulvus*.

Decline and regrowth of the population

The population of the Egyptian Vulture in southern France and the Pyrénées underwent a strong decline in the years preceding the 1980s, but has since recovered to a healthier level. This was apparent not only in our study area, but also in the neighbouring regions of Provence, in southeast France (Bergier 1985), and Aragon, on the southern slope of the Pyrénées in Spain (Kostrzewa *et al.* 1986).

During the main period of our study, regular checking of sites that had been abandoned for more than ten years, together with a systematic search of all potential breeding sites, enabled us to record the reoccupation of six sites, the discovery of ten new ones, and successful breeding at a site where a regular pair had taken a seven-year 'sabbatical' during 1977-83.

Table 1 summarises the annual development of the Béarn population from 1984 to 1995. The years 1982 and 1983, when our fieldwork was less intensive, are also included, to highlight the low point of this population (six pairs in 1984) and the subsequent spectacular recovery and growth (to 21 pairs in 1990). The population stabilised at 20-21 pairs during 1990-95.

This apparent stagnation in the 1990s could, we believe, be linked with two factors. First, usurpation of eyries and competition for habitat by the Griffon Vulture represent an appreciable limiting factor (see below); and, secondly, observer effort and efficiency tend, through the process of habituation, to decrease over the course of the years, particularly with regard to searching for potential new breeding sites. It is possible, if not probable, that two or even three sites may have escaped detection in 1994 and 1995, bearing in mind the large extent of suitable breeding habitat available in the study area.

Site fidelity

A striking feature of this study was the great fidelity of pairs to breeding sites, so long as they were not subject to heavy disturbance or interspecific parasitism. Apart from instances of nest-site usurpation by Griffon Vultures (see below), we recorded only two definite cases of site desertion out of 205 pairs monitored. The first occurred at the highest site in the study area, at 1,450 m, within the montane and subalpine zone; this was a result of unusual weather conditions, with heavy snowfalls in two years out of three in April, the month when the pair was establishing territory. The second was in Vallée d'Aspe, very probably caused by disturbance from increasingly heavy traffic on the roadway; the pair involved re-established itself at a site 300 m higher up.

Factors responsible for the resurgence of the population

Climatic influences

The influence of climatic conditions on population fluctuations and reproduction was discussed by Carlon (1992). Two interesting facts have emerged from this study: the low percentage of breeding failures, and the development of earlier and more successful fledging.

In years with 'normal' weather conditions, breeding failures appear to be relatively rare. In Provence, Bergier & Cheylan (1980) recorded only four failures (6.8%) out of 59 breeding attempts. In Béarn, of 66 breeding attempts over the five years 1985-88 & 1990, only five failed (7.5%, a figure roughly equivalent to theirs), even though the Mediterranean climate is more favourable to the species. On the other hand, the Provençale region is subject to much greater disturbance, owing to the greater accessibility of nesting sites.

Breeding success across the entire northern slope of the Pyrénées in normal years during 1959-85 was shown to be 77% (Braillon 1986). In Béarn, during 1985-90, we recorded only ten breeding failures (plus two suspected failures) out of 91 pairs, giving a success rate of 88%. This improvement appears to be due to better weather conditions during the early stages of development of the young. This was borne out in 1991, when six pairs failed out of a total of 21, all but one (which was probably due to human disturbance) at or soon after hatching. In that year, precipitation was 15.1% less than in the three preceding years, but temperature and total sunshine hours were both 14-15% lower, and these last two parameters would appear to be of the greatest importance during the critical period of hatching and early development. Note that cold, wet springs, such as occurred in 1988, do not necessarily lead to failure if hatching takes place after such weather has ceased.

During the study period, a distinct advancement in fledging date was noted. Up to 1987, the mean fledging date in Béarn was about 20th August; during the two drought years which followed (1989, 1990), it was 12th August, where it remained. Owing to much earlier fledging at some sites in 1994—2nd and 5th August, 25th and 30th July, and an unprecedented 11th July in Vallée d'Aspe (M. & R. Cruse *in litt.*)—the mean date for fledging has been brought forward to 25th July.

We also recorded a small increase in productivity, with a higher number of juveniles reared per pair during 1988-95 (mean 1.26/pair) than during 1959-85 (1.17/pair) (table 2). Given that 1989 and 1990 were drought years, we demonstrated (Carlon 1992) that higher temperatures, increased total sunshine hours and a drop in total precipitation were determining factors in this increase in fledging rate.

As recording fledging success requires an enormous amount of time in the field, it was not possible to determine this throughout the entire 12-year period. Nevertheless, we were able to calculate it for six years (1988-90, 1991-92 and 1995; table 2). These involved a significant number of breeding attempts (88), and a representative sample of climatic conditions which included two years (1989-90) of dry, hot weather, followed by two years (1991-92) with particularly cold and wet weather throughout the most critical

stages (May-June: end of incubation, hatching and first days of life of the chicks), and then by one year of drought (1995). On the basis of these criteria, and a rigorous follow-up during the three periods, we consider our figure of 1.26 young/pair a realistic one, corroborated by and comparable with those published for Provence (1.38-1.40: Bergier & Cheylan 1980; Bergier 1985; Bayle 1990) and for the Spanish slope of the Pyrénées in Catalonia and Navarra (1.29-1.75: Donazar & Ceballos-Ruiz 1988). Note that this increase in fledging rate is due almost solely to the higher percentage of broods of two young in years when weather conditions were very favourable for this sun-loving species.

Especially when climatic conditions have been propitious, fieldwork needs to be concentrated during and subsequent to the period when the young leave the nest (about the third week in July to late August); this is particularly true when the brood contains two young.

Other possible influences

As well as these climatic factors that have played a major role on the two sides of the Pyrenean massif, particularly in Béarn, there are others, not insignificant, that need to be examined (see Carlou 1989).

The resurgence of the population may best be appreciated by dividing the period into two parts. In 1982-85, the combined number of occupied sites was 33 (possibly 35), or an annual mean of eight or nine; in 1986-88, this total rose to 46, or a mean of 15 or 16 per year (table 1). During 1979-83, Bergier (1985) recorded, in Provence, the recolonisation of a territory abandoned since 1965, the occupation of a new site, and the observation of several immatures during the breeding season, while in Aragon, Spain, in 1984-85, a population increase was confirmed for the first time (Kostrzewa *et al.* 1986).

Table 1. Sites occupied by Egyptian Vultures *Neophron percnopterus* in Béarn, southwest France, from 1982 to 1995.

Totals include 6 reoccupied sites and 10 newly discovered sites.

	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
Total occupied sites	9	7	6	11	13	15	18	19	21	21	20	20	21	20
Sites vacant since 1968 and reoccupied by 1987						← 6 →								
New sites									← 10 →					

Several possible factors may explain these changes. In the western part of the west Pyrénées, the Griffon Vulture population underwent a spectacular growth: from 61 pairs in 1976, to 78 in 1979, and 168 pairs with 122-130 young fledged in 1986 (J.-J. Lequémeneur, verbally 1986). The numerous local rubbish dumps (for household waste) were amalgamated during the late 1970s and the 1980s into vast refuse tips, most of which were sited at the entrance to large valleys; Egyptian Vultures are frequently observed at these sites. Feeding stations, initially intended for Griffon Vultures, regularly

Table 2. Mean fledging rate of Egyptian Vultures *Neophron percnopterus* in Béarn, southwest France, 1959-95.

Figures refer to number of young per successful pair. Data for 1959-85 are from Braillon (1986).

	1959-85	1988-90	1991-92	1995	Average 1988-95
No. juvs	1.17	1.34	1.08	1.35	1.26
Sample	—	27	41	20	88

attracted the smaller species, with increasing numbers of adults in June (i.e. at the start of brood-feeding). Pastoralism, a not insignificant source of food, had been maintained at apparently the same level during the period. In addition, Egyptian Vultures regularly foraged along the banks of upland watercourses, which are subject to increasing eutrophication.

What was probably a more decisive influence was the fluctuations of the very large Iberian population of Egyptian Vultures. This was estimated at 2,000 pairs in the 1970s (Bijleveld 1974) and was showing worrying signs of decline in most of the provinces (Cramp & Simmons 1980), this being confirmed by a 1985 census which produced a figure of 950-1,100 pairs (Congrès international sur les Rapaces méditerranéens, Evora, Portugal, 1986). This historical picture enables a better appreciation of a factor which is relevant to the Béarn study: namely, the increase, starting in 1984, of the Aragon population, recorded by Kostrzewa *et al.* (1986), who have also pointed out (*in litt.*) that poisoned baits aimed at Red Foxes *Vulpes vulpes* and Carrion Crows *Corvus corone* were outlawed throughout Spain from 1984.

It is also worth bearing in mind the abundance of suitable breeding habitat available in the Pyrenean region. This fourth positive factor (after those of relative food abundance, presence of the large Spanish population on the southern slopes, and increased rate of expansion of the Griffon Vulture population in recent years) throws into particular relief the situation of the Egyptian Vulture in the western Pyrénées, and more particularly in Béarn.

While the position of the Egyptian Vulture in southwest France remains precarious and of concern, it is nevertheless more favourable than those of the Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos* and the Lammergeier *Gypaetus barbatus*. It cannot, however, rival the recent dynamism of the smaller predators such as the Red Kite *Milvus milvus* and especially the Black Kite *M. migrans*, both clearly increasing, or even more so that of the Common Raven *Corvus corax*, which has undergone a spectacular expansion during the last decade in the département of Pyrénées-Atlantiques.

Relationships between Egyptian and Griffon Vultures

On the outskirts of Griffon Vulture colonies, or sometimes a few kilometres away, it is not unusual to see one or two Egyptian Vultures joining in with the comings and goings, or taking advantage of the larger species' exploratory flights and, being less suspicious, descending before the Griffons when a carcase has been spotted. This behaviour, however, then brings the Griffon Vultures down to the feast, and during this period the Egyptian Vulture, given

its subordinate status in the interspecific hierarchy of vultures, demonstrates patience and prudence.

Cohabitation with the large vultures is noteworthy and can be observed particularly in those areas where there are many large Griffon colonies, as in the Vallée d'Aspe. The attraction exerted by the Griffon Vulture may be demonstrated by the fact that, in Les Causses, following that species' successful reintroduction in 1982, the Egyptian Vulture appeared almost immediately, after having ceased to nest in that region in 1955; others followed, and a pair established itself from 1984 (C. Bagnolini, J. Bonnet & J.-L. Pinna *in litt.*).

The height of Egyptian Vulture eyries in cliff sites seems to be a direct consequence of the marked dominance of the Griffon Vulture. In all but one of the large Griffon colonies in Béarn, the nests of Egyptian Vultures occupy the base of these sites, whereas in the years 1965-70, when Griffon numbers were about 80% lower than in 1985, they were higher up the cliffs. This change can probably be attributed to the constant activity of Griffon Vultures at their colonies and the resulting numerous interactions creating permanent disturbance in the close surroundings of the eyries (see below). The immediate departure of an Egyptian Vulture from a tiny cramped ledge as soon as a Griffon Vulture lands is further evidence of the disturbance and the dominance exerted by the latter. On the other hand, adult Egyptian Vultures move around at all levels in these colonies, and make frequent inspections of Griffon nest sites; similar visits by Egyptian Vultures to nest sites of Lammergeiers have been observed (Terrasse & Terrasse 1967).

From numerous observations gathered in recent years, I suggest that the term 'mutualism', or commensalism strongly tinged with mutualism, best describes the relationship between the two species. The Egyptian Vulture, as it precedes or often joins the Griffons in searching for carrion, and as it is bolder or more daring at such times, can play a role of 'reconnaissance' and can also 'give the all-clear': in other words, it tends to attract the larger vultures to food more quickly because it is often the first to descend, and, because it is more cautious when on the ground, it thereby indicates that it is safe to feed there. On the other hand, the Griffon parasitises the smaller species in several ways.

Parasitisation by Griffon Vultures

In 1986, in the Griffon Vulture colony in Vallée d'Ossau which had experienced an unprecedented growth from 1979 to 1993 (Carlön 1993), an Egyptian Vulture eyrie was taken over by a pair of Griffons. A further nine pairs of Egyptian Vultures in the study area have had their breeding attempts disrupted by loss of their eyries, or have been forced to move to different sites.

I have witnessed three instances of food parasitism by Griffon Vultures at two Egyptian Vulture sites. One of these caused the two young to leave the nest prematurely, one young disappearing for good. In 1988, at a large Griffon colony, a breeding attempt failed at the chick stage (approximate age three weeks) following the frequent presence of a Griffon Vulture at the eyrie; although the exact cause of death could not be determined, the Griffon had been seen feeding there on several occasions. Another eyrie, while being

prepared for nesting, was abandoned following the frequent presence of a Griffon on the nest ledge. These three examples indicate the disturbances and losses suffered by the Egyptian Vulture during the breeding period at sites where it coexists with large colonies of Griffon Vultures.

More recently, in spring 1996, in Vallée d'Aspe, a particularly prolific pair of Egyptian Vultures which produced two young every other year, and had occupied a large, very accessible cave for eight years, was forced out when a pair of Griffon Vultures set up breeding territory at the site in January.

It is worth noting that, in Spain, Bonelli's Eagle *Hieraetus fasciatus* and Lammergeier suffer the same fate, with Griffon Vultures taking over 40% of their breeding sites (Kostrzewa & Galushin 1992). In Béarn, the Booted Eagle *H. pennatus* is victim of a similar exclusion in the Gave de Pau plain by the Black Kite, still expanding in this region and whose pre-breeding arrival is one month earlier than the eagle's (Carlon 1995, 1996b).

Modification of breeding behaviour

A direct consequence of this parasitisation of eyries by Griffon Vultures was the emergence of two new adaptations by the Egyptian Vulture. The first was the selection of a breeding place in cliff sites of smaller size, on sheltered or camouflaged narrow ledges or equivalent caves, but where Griffon Vultures were not present. The second was to breed, when the possibility still remained, at the heart of the Griffon colony, this time not on narrow ledges or even in big caves, but in small cavities without reception ledges, thus preventing access by Griffons; or else to select sites at the base of these same cliffs, little visited by and even inaccessible to the Griffons.

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SHORT REVIEWS

Understanding Owls. By Jemima Parry-Jones. (David & Charles, Newton Abbot, 1998. 160 pages. ISBN 0-7153-0643-X. £17.99). Owls are always fascinating, with their forward-facing eyes and somewhat human appearance. Just examine John Crookes's cartoons scattered throughout this volume. A total of 119 pages is devoted to owls in captivity. Whatever your views on this may be, it is written knowledgeably, by an acknowledged expert in the field, with all the necessary warnings included. Jemima has written this in her own highly individual and entertaining style—I even managed to find the odd (minor) swear word in the text.

BOB SCOTT

Handbook of Waterfowl Identification. By Frank S. Todd. (Ibis Publishing, Vista, 1997. 104 pages. ISBN 0-934797-14-5. Paperback \$19.95) The word 'Adult' needs to be inserted before 'Waterfowl' in the title. Frank Todd has taken colour photographs, distribution maps and an appendix from his comprehensive *Natural History of the Waterfowl* (1996, from the same publisher) and created a handy pocket guide to the World's wildfowl. Only adult birds are illustrated or described: one or two photographs and two or three sentences per species. The appendix lists mean weights (in pounds!), clutch size and incubation and fledging periods.

ALAO

ALSO RECEIVED

Self-assessment Review of Avian Medicine. By Neil A. Forbes & Robert B. Altman. (Manson Publishing, London, 1998. 192 pages. ISBN 1-874545-71-5. Paperback £18.95)



Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 1995

Malcolm Ogilvie and the Rare Breeding Birds Panel

This, the twenty-third annual report of the Rare Breeding Birds Panel, contains information on the breeding in 1995 of the species on the Panel's list, whether proven, probable or possible. As usual, the amount of detail included varies according to the perceived sensitivity of the species to intentional disturbance or to nest robbery. Thus, for the majority, the counties are grouped into the Panel's ten regions (see below), though for some it is possible to list the actual counties. For a few species, only country totals are given.

There has been some unfortunate slippage in the production of this report, but we hope to make amends with the 1996 report, which should follow this one after a shorter interval.

The Panel

The current (April 1998) membership of the Panel is Dr L. A. Batten, Dr C. J. Bibby, Dr H. Q. P. Crick, Dr J. T. R. Sharrock, Dr K. W. Smith, D. A. Stroud and Dr M. A. Ogilvie (Secretary). The individual members of the Panel serve in a personal capacity, but four of them are additionally able to reflect the interests and needs of the respective sponsoring bodies. The work of the Panel is supported financially by the JNCC (on behalf of the country conservation agencies), with further contributions coming from the RSPB, the BTO and *British Birds*.

The Panel collects records from the whole of the United Kingdom, including Northern Ireland, but not from the Republic of Ireland. Coverage in 1995 was almost complete, with records (or nil returns) received from virtually every county and region. Information for some species remains patchy, however, and any known gaps are mentioned in the species accounts.

Review of the year 1995

The weather continues to exert a considerable influence on the success or otherwise of many of Britain's rare breeding birds. As will be apparent from reading the species accounts below, gales and rain at critical periods during the breeding cycle adversely affected a number of species in 1995, especially Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* and Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*. Predation and high tides took their toll of some coastal nesting species, especially Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*. Slavonian Grebes *P. auritus* achieved a welcome recovery from last year's low, with an especially pleasing increase in productivity, and four pairs of Red-necked Grebes *Podiceps grisegena*, all seen displaying, with one pair copulating and nest-building, is the best ever. Black-necked Grebes *P. nigricollis* also reached a new high for confirmed pairs. Despite a slight fall in the number of sites, the total of 'booming' Great Bitterns *Botaurus stellaris* was the same as last year, while at least 14 young were reared, compared with eight or nine.

The occurrence of two pairs of Spoonbills *Platalea leucorodia*, one bird being seen to collect nesting material, may be the precursor of a colonisation, just as the continued presence of pairs of Little Egrets *Egretta garzetta* finally (in 1997, *Brit. Birds* 91: 273-280) led to successful breeding, though not in 1995. As expected, reported numbers of Northern Pintails *Anas acuta* fell in the absence of last year's full survey of Orkney. Garganeys *A. querquedula* increased in England and Wales, though it was a very poor year for them in Scotland. Greater Scaups *Aythya marila* appeared in Scotland for the second summer running, while a full survey of all known haunts of Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra* produced a population estimate of 76-89 potential pairs, indicating a decline from the approximately 100 pairs in the mid 1980s.

Honey-buzzards *Pernis apivorus* continued to increase slowly, for the sixth successive year, and the minimum of 13 young reportedly reared was also a new record. The Welsh Red Kites *Milvus milvus* maintained their long-term increase, while the re-established birds in England and Scotland also continued to grow in numbers and expand in range. Both Marsh *Circus aeruginosus* and Montagu's Harriers *C. pygargus* had good seasons, with record numbers of young, though production per pair of the former species was down. A male Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus* and a female Hen Harrier *C. cyaneus* bred together in Scotland, though sadly the eggs were eaten by a predator. Ospreys fell one short of the 'century' of breeding pairs, and failures due to high winds and rain were added to by no fewer than six robberies.

It was another good year for Common Quails *Coturnix coturnix*, but Spotted Crakes *Porzana porzana* had their second successive poor year and none was proved to breed. Corn Crakes *Crex crex* continued their recovery in their main haunts on the Scottish islands, thanks in the main to the conservation efforts of the RSPB, Scottish Natural Heritage and the Scottish Crofters' Union.

The number of confirmed pairs of Avocets fell back from last year's peak, while production was little short of disastrous, with the lowest number of young reared since 1984 and, allowing for incomplete reporting, the worst production per pair since 1977. Predation by Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes* and gulls

Larus is the most serious problem at a number of sites, though bad weather at key moments also contributed. Stone-curlews *Burhinus oedicephalus* increased for the seventh year running, with a substantial increase in the number of young reared compared with last year's low figure. No Ruffs *Philomachus pugnax* were proved to breed this year, but Black-tailed Godwits *Limosa limosa* did better.

Of the rarer waders, only Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola* had a good year, with at least seven pairs breeding. The Red-necked Phalaropes *Phalaropus lobatus* on Fetlar continued to do well, but breeding away from Shetland seems to have ceased.

The first breeding by Yellow-legged Gulls *Larus cachinnans* in Britain was reported, though it is not thought that any young were reared. Numbers of Mediterranean Gulls *L. melanocephalus* seem to have levelled off over the last four years, while there was just one hybrid pairing with Black-headed Gull *L. ridibundus*. The long-standing hybrid pair of Lesser Crested *Sterna bengalensis* and Sandwich Terns *S. sandvicensis* bred yet again, but unsuccessfully. Roseate Terns *S. dougallii* had another poor year.

A pair of Bluethroats *Luscinia svecica* bred successfully in Scotland, only the second breeding record of this species in Britain and the first time that young have been reared. A second male, at a different site, was heard singing. The reported number of Black Redstarts *Phoenicurus ochruros* fell back to the 1993 level after the boost given last year by the survey of the Greater London area. A pair of Fieldfares *Turdus pilaris* bred after last year's gap, but total numbers were small.

Cetti's *Cettia cetti* and Dartford Warblers *Sylvia undata* had good seasons, but Savi's Warblers *Locustella luscinioides* are declining fast. Marsh Warblers *Acrocephalus palustris* also declined in numbers for the second year running, while last year's increase in localities did not last.

These reports now regularly include records of males of different species of vagrant warblers singing and, occasionally, nest-building, and some of these may one day breed with us.

Golden Orioles seem to have the worst luck of any rare breeding species when it comes to weather. The losses in 1994 from heavy rain and bad storms destroying nests were repeated this year, and only 7-11 young were thought to have been reared. There were more Bramblings *Fringilla montifringilla* than for over ten years, with nest-building and singing reported, though no confirmed breeding.

As more work is done on the crossbills *Loxia* of Scotland, so new and sometimes puzzling facts are coming to light, such as the seven adults at five nests which had bill measurements well within the limits for Parrot Crossbill *L. pytyopsittacus*. For the first time for six years, a Lapland Longspur *Calcarius lapponicus* appeared in suitable habitat.

Conservation uses of Panel data

It is the policy of the Panel to make data available for conservation uses where this is compatible with the constraints of confidentiality. As well as site-specific information (e.g. for reviews of Special Protection Areas), national

data sets have been used by the RSPB for planning surveys. Panel data have also played a key role in reviews of birds of conservation concern and national population estimates, together with the development of recovery plans for certain species.

Publications

A number of papers on Panel species, including results of surveys, are listed at the end, under References.

Acknowledgments

The Panel, and in particular its Secretary, very gratefully acknowledges the willing co-operation of all the many county, regional and local recorders throughout the country. Completing the forms is just one more burden put upon their willing shoulders, and it is greatly appreciated.

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We should also like to express our sincere thanks to all the very many individuals whose fieldwork produced the observations which make up this report.

Key to geographical regions used in this report

England, SW Avon, Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Gloucestershire, Hampshire, Isles of Scilly, Isle of Wight, Somerset, Wiltshire

England, SE Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Essex, Greater London, Hertfordshire, Kent, Middlesex, Oxfordshire, Surrey, Sussex (East and West)

England, E Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire, Lincolnshire and South Humberside, Norfolk, Northamptonshire, Suffolk

England, Central Derbyshire, Herefordshire, Leicestershire (with Rutland), Nottinghamshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, West Midlands, Worcestershire

England, N Cheshire, Cleveland, Cumbria, Durham, Greater Manchester, Isle of Man, Lancashire, Merseyside, Northumberland, North Humberside, Tyne & Wear, Yorkshire (North, South and West)

Wales All present-day counties (i.e. includes Gwent, the former Monmouth)

Scotland, S The regions of Borders, Dumfries & Galloway, Lothian and part of Strathclyde, comprising the former counties of Ayrshire, Berwickshire, Dumfriesshire, Kirkcudbrightshire, Lanarkshire, Lothian (East, Mid and West), Peeblesshire, Renfrewshire, Roxburghshire, Selkirkshire, Wigtownshire

Scotland, Mid The regions of Central, Fife, Grampian and Tayside, together with parts of Highland and Strathclyde, comprising the former counties of Aberdeenshire, Angus, Banffshire, Clackmannanshire, Dunbartonshire, Fife, Kincardineshire, Kinross, Moray, Nairn, Perthshire, Stirlingshire

Scotland, N & W Orkney, Shetland and the Western Isles, together with the greater part of Highland and part of Strathclyde, comprising the former counties of Argyllshire, Bute, Caithness, Inverness-shire, Ross & Cromarty, Sutherland

Northern Ireland Antrim, Armagh, Down, Fermanagh, Londonderry, Tyrone

Systematic list

The definitions of ‘Confirmed breeding’, ‘Probable breeding’ and ‘Possible breeding’ used in the Panel’s reports follow those recommended by the European Ornithological Atlas Committee (now part of the European Bird Census Council). Within tables, the abbreviations ‘Confirmed (pairs)’ and ‘Possible/probable (pairs)’ mean ‘Number of pairs confirmed breeding’ and ‘Number of pairs possibly or probably breeding’, respectively.

Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer*

One locality: single.
Scotland, N & W One locality: adult present on loch late June and early July, possibly paired to Black-throated Diver *Gavia arctica*

A hybrid pair involving these two species occurred in 1985 and 1986, with eggs being laid in the latter year, though the single chick which hatched failed to survive. The only proven breeding record by a Great Northern Diver pair in Britain was in 1970 (*Scot. Birds* 6: 195).

Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps*

No breeding records.
An adult was present at Stithians Reservoir, Cornwall, throughout the summer, while one of the hybrid young, from the 1994 nesting with Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*, was last seen in late March, but there were no signs of any further breeding activity.

Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena*

Six localities in six counties: pair copulated and built platforms; two other pairs displayed.
England, E Two localities: (1) one in summer plumage from 29th March to 3rd September and second bird from 29th April to 24th May, with some calling and display; (2) one from 25th March to 30th August.
England, N Two localities: (1) pair from 29th January to 8th May, with much loud calling for two weeks prior to their departure; (2) adult from 20th May to 29th June.
Scotland, S One locality: pair at regular summering site, seen copulating and built nest platforms, but no egg-laying suspected.
Scotland, Mid One locality: two adults, probably a pair, on 3rd June only.

	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
No. localities	1	5	10	8	6	5	3	9	7	10	6
No. individuals	4	5	9	12	9	3	4	12	7	13	10
No. pairs	1	1	1	3	3	2	1	3	0	1	4

The southern Scotland pair was observed copulating and nest-building, behaviour that has been noted in almost every year since 1983, but, as usual, there were no further developments. With three other pairs seen displaying, this is the largest number of active pairs yet recorded, though the number of single birds observed was the lowest for ten years.

Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus*

31 localities: 58-65 pairs breeding.
Scotland, Mid and N & W 31 localities: (1)-(31) total of 58 pairs bred, producing minimum of 46 young to near fledging; also seven singles.

	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
No. localities	40	43	39	22	39	36	31	34	33	32	31
Confirmed (pairs)	63	68	33	31	70	74	61	72	73	51	58
Possible/probable (pairs)	18	19	6	6	8	12	13	5	4	8	7
Max. total (pairs)	81	87	39	37	78	86	74	77	77	59	65

A slight, but welcome, increase in the number of breeding pairs from last year's six-year low, while the number of young reared was the best since 1992 and the productivity figure of 0.79 young per pair was well above the 25-year average of 0.62. The Panel is grateful to the North of Scotland Regional Office of the RSPB for information on numbers and breeding performance. Detailed research into the breeding biology of this species was carried out by the RSPB in 1992 and 1993 (Summers & Mavor 1995).

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*

30 localities in 15 counties: minimum 30-77 pairs breeding, hatching at least 36 young.

England, SW Two localities: 4-12 pairs.

HAMPSHIRE Two localities: four pairs bred, two other pairs and six singles.

England, SE One locality: pair.

KENT One locality: pair.

England, E Nine localities: 1-18 pairs.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE Two localities: pair bred and four singles. HUNTINGDON & PETERBOROUGH Four localities: pair and seven singles. NORTHAMPTONSHIRE Three localities: two pairs, including display, and three singles.

England, Central Five localities: 0-5 pairs.

LEICESTERSHIRE Two localities: two singles. NOTTINGHAMSHIRE Two localities: pair and one single. SHROPSHIRE One locality: pair.

England, N Four localities: 14-23 pairs.

CHESHIRE One locality: two pairs bred. GREATER MANCHESTER One locality: pair bred, plus one other pair. NORTHUMBERLAND Two localities: 11 pairs bred, plus eight other pairs.

Wales One locality: 0-1 pair.

GWYNEDD One locality: pair.

Scotland, S Three localities: 2-3 pairs.

BORDERS Three localities: two pairs bred and one single.

Scotland, Mid Five localities: 9-14 pairs.

FIFE Two localities: three pairs. TAYSIDE Three localities: nine pairs bred, one other pair and one single.

	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
No. localities	17	15	19	22	19	19	25	29	31	32	30
Confirmed (pairs)	9	11	27	15	25	21	19	26	24	27	30
Possible/probable (pairs)	13	22	12	20	15	16	34	34	26	54	47
Max. total (pairs)	22	33	39	35	40	37	53	60	50	81	77

The largest number of confirmed pairs ever recorded. Just as the 1994 total of confirmed pairs could have been up to 11 pairs higher, as full details were not received from an important Scottish site, so, this year, no report was received from an important site in North Humberside where 14 pairs bred in 1994. Successful breeding occurred in southern England after a year's gap.

Black-browed Albatross *Diomedea melanophris*

One locality: one in spring and summer.
Scotland, N & W One locality.
SHETLAND One locality: adult in colony of Northern Gannets *Morus bassanus*, Hermaness, from 3rd April to 7th July.
The twenty-fifth year of summering (missing only 1988 and 1989) and, as last year, staying for over three months.

Great Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*

13 localities: minimum of 20 and maximum of 21 booming males, with minimum of 12 young fledged.
England, SE Two localities: (1) single on 16th April (up to four in mid March); (2) single on 3rd May.
England, E Ten localities: (1) four booming males, two nests found, at least three young fledged; (2) four booming males, two nests found, number of young unknown; (3) booming male, nest found, three young hatched, two probably fledged; (4)(5) booming male, nest found, two young fledged; (6) booming male, nest found, three eggs, one hatched, not known if fledged; (7)-(9) booming male in May and/or June, no evidence of breeding; (10) booming male on 29th April only.
England, N One locality: four, possibly five, booming males, three nests found, five fledged young seen.

	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
No. localities	15	12	17	14	14	12	13	14	13	16	13
Confirmed nests	0	0	1	2	3	3	4	4	5	5	11
Booming males	28	23	22	30	30	20	19	19	17	20	20

Although the slight improvement in the number of localities shown in 1994 has not been sustained, the number of booming males has stayed at the same level. The considerable increase in the number of nests found reflects the detailed research now being carried out on this species by RSPB staff. The number of young fledged represents a significant increase on the eight or nine thought to have done so last year.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

Ten localities: up to 12 pairs.
England, SW Nine localities, with ten pairs present throughout the summer, though no signs of breeding.
Wales One locality: two pairs seen displaying in colony of Grey Herons *Ardea cinerea* in March, but no further activity.

The above are the actual pairs reported to the Panel, as opposed to the many flocks also present in southern Britain.

Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*

One locality: two pairs.
England, E One locality: up to four present between 14th April and 10th August; at least one seen collecting nesting material in late April. There were several other records of Spoonbills in the same county during the spring.
The only previous report of this species to the Panel was in 1989 when a pair started to build a nest in late July. The breeding population in the Netherlands has been increasing in recent years, with over 600 pairs in 1993

compared with about 150 in the 1960s, when pesticides had considerably reduced numbers (Osieck & Voslamber 1997), so further activity in eastern England may be expected.

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*

Nine localities: pair bred, but failed.

England, SE Two localities: two singles, both released birds. No reports were received from the sites where released pairs bred or attempted to breed in 1994.

Scotland, S Two localities: (1) pair, probably released, laid eggs but none hatched; (2) one, presumed injured, summered.

Scotland, N & W Five localities: (1) single bird built a nest and sat on it for a while; (2)-(5) singles summering, one of which displayed.

Last year's successful breeding by apparently wild birds in North & West Scotland was not repeated and there was a return to the more usual scattering of single, probably mostly injured, birds. Nor were there any reports of introduced or released birds breeding successfully.

Black Duck *Anas rubripes*

One locality: one.

England, SW One locality: one male.

SCILLY A male, which has been present on Tresco since 1st April 1994, was present throughout the year and seen to be paired to a female Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*. It is not known whether breeding took place, but no young were seen.

It remains to be seen whether this hybrid pair will emulate the pairing between a female Black Duck and a male Mallard which occurred at the same site in the late 1970s and early 1980s, producing several young.

Northern Pintail *Anas acuta*

25 localities: 11-45 pairs breeding.

England, SE Five localities: 1-7 pairs.

KENT Four localities: three pairs, and three singles. **SUSSEX** One locality: pair bred.

England, E Six localities: 1-9 pairs.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE One locality: three pairs, no evidence of breeding. **NORFOLK** Four localities: four pairs, and one single. **SUFFOLK** One locality: pair bred unsuccessfully.

England, Central One locality: 0-1 pair.

LEICESTERSHIRE One locality: pair present in April.

England, N Two localities: 0-5 pairs.

LANCASHIRE One locality: four pairs, uncertain whether any breeding attempt.

NORTHUMBERLAND One locality: single male throughout May.

Wales Two localities: 2-3 pairs.

PEMBROKESHIRE Two localities: two pairs bred, and single female throughout year which may have attempted to breed.

Scotland, S One locality: 0-2 pairs.

AYRSHIRE One locality: two females.

Scotland, Mid One locality: 0-4 pairs.

GRAMPIAN One locality: four males in May and June.

Scotland, N & W Seven localities: 7-14 pairs.

ARGYLL One locality: two pairs summered, but no evidence of breeding. **INVERNESS** One locality: two pairs bred. **ORKNEY** Five localities: five pairs bred, two other pairs and three singles.

	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
No. localities	17	14	16	20	16	20	28	23	23	49	25
Confirmed (pairs)	9	6	7	14	11	9	4	13	4	20	11
Possible/probable (pairs)	12	12	14	15	28	27	39	35	43	56	34
Max. total (pairs)	21	18	21	29	38	36	43	48	47	76	45

Last year's boost to the numbers was produced almost entirely by the full survey undertaken of Orkney. In its absence this year, and with fewer pairs reported from both England and Wales, numbers have fallen back to the levels of the three previous years.

Garganey *Anas querquedula*

81 localities: 9-117 pairs breeding.

England, SW Nine localities: 0-14 pairs.

AVON One locality: pair and one male. DEVON Four localities: four single males. SOMERSET Four localities: two pairs and six males.

England, SE 23 localities: 2-32 pairs.

ESSEX Four localities: pair and four males. HERTFORDSHIRE Two localities: male and immature male in late summer. KENT Eight localities: pair bred, four pairs and seven males and one single. GREATER LONDON One locality: male. SUSSEX Eight localities: pair bred, five pairs and five males.

England, E 26 localities: 3-42 pairs.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE Three localities: two pairs bred, two pairs and one male. HUNTINGDON & PETERBOROUGH Three localities: pair and four males. LINCOLNSHIRE Two localities: two males. NORFOLK Six localities: pair bred, nine pairs and seven males. NORTHAMPTONSHIRE Four localities: three pairs and one male. SUFFOLK Eight localities: two pairs and seven males.

England, Central Two localities: 0-2 pairs.

LEICESTERSHIRE One locality: pair. STAFFORDSHIRE One locality: pair.

England, N Three localities: 3-5 pairs.

GREATER MANCHESTER One locality: pair. LANCASHIRE One locality: pair. YORKSHIRE One locality: three pairs bred, eight young seen.

Wales 14 localities: 0-17 pairs.

ANGLESEY Two localities: two pairs and three males. REST OF COUNTRY 12 records of singles at 12 localities.

Scotland, S One locality: 0-2 pairs.

AYRSHIRE One locality: two pairs, not known if breeding attempted.

Scotland, Mid Two localities: 1-2 pairs.

GRAMPIAN One locality: pair. TAYSIDE One locality: pair bred unsuccessfully.

Scotland, N & W One locality: 0-1 pair.

ARGYLL One locality: male.

	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
No. localities	32	42	36	37	81	87	90	90	73	65	81
Confirmed (pairs)	4	8	8	11	18	14	12	16	14	13	9
Possible/probable (pairs)	36	47	37	40	80	97	82	144	149	98	108
Max. total (pairs)	40	55	45	51	98	111	94	160	163	111	117

A slightly better year than 1994, with more in eastern England and in Wales, but the worst year for Scotland since 1988.

Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*

142 localities or areas: 309-494 pairs breeding.

England, SW 12 localities: 10-32 pairs.

AVON One locality: 12 females in late April, no evidence of breeding. CORNWALL Three localities: pair and single male and single female. HAMPSHIRE Five localities: seven pairs bred, three other pairs. SOMERSET Three localities: three pairs bred and four males. WILTSHIRE Nil return, the first time since 1977 that there has been no breeding.

England, SE 50 localities or areas: 156-220 pairs.

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE Two localities: five pairs bred. ESSEX 17 localities: 34 pairs bred, and 35 other pairs. GREATER LONDON Seven localities: ten pairs bred, four other pairs and two males. HERTFORDSHIRE Five localities: four pairs bred, and two other pairs. KENT Eight localities or areas: 100 pairs bred, no count of other pairs. SURREY Nine localities: three pairs bred, 16 other pairs and one single. SUSSEX Two localities: five pairs.

England, E 33 localities: 89-107 pairs.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE Four localities: eight pairs bred, one other pair. LINCOLNSHIRE One locality: at least 21 pairs bred. NORFOLK 19 localities: 58 pairs bred, and eight other pairs. NORTHAMPTONSHIRE Seven localities: pair bred, at least five other pairs or singles. SUFFOLK Two localities: (1) four pairs; (2) pair bred.

England, Central 14 localities: 7-41 pairs.

DERBYSHIRE One locality: pair bred. LEICESTERSHIRE Eight localities: three pairs and 31 males. NOTTINGHAMSHIRE Four localities: five pairs bred. SHROPSHIRE One locality: pair bred.

England, N 13 localities: 30-54 pairs.

CUMBRIA One locality: two pairs bred. GREATER MANCHESTER Two localities: three pairs bred. LANCASHIRE Three localities: eight pairs bred. NORTH HUMBERSIDE One locality: at least one pair bred, plus eight pairs. NORTHUMBERLAND Five localities: 14 pairs bred, and six other pairs. YORKSHIRE One locality: at least two pairs bred, plus ten other pairs.

Wales Six localities: 9-14 pairs.

ANGLESEY One locality: up to eight pairs bred, and one other pair. GLAMORGAN One locality: pair bred. ELSEWHERE Four localities: pairs or singles at each.

Scotland, S Six localities: 4-12 pairs.

BORDERS Six localities: four pairs bred, four other pairs and two males and two females.

Scotland, Mid Eight localities: 4-12 pairs.

FIFE One locality: pair bred. GRAMPIAN One locality: pair in May. TAYSIDE Six localities: three pairs bred, six other pairs and a male.

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
No. localities	68	63	138	116	133	161	145	117	158	142
Confirmed (pairs)	126	130	185	260	207	284	266	237	347	309
Possible/probable (pairs)	59	44	162	76	86	144	292	179	291	185
Max. total (pairs)	185	174	347	336	293	428	558	416	638	494

Although numbers have fallen back from last year's peak, this reflects variation in reporting from some important counties, with a concentration on successful breeding pairs, which have dropped much less than reports of non-breeding pairs and single birds.

Greater Scaup *Aythya marila*

Three localities: two pairs, two males and a female.

England, E One locality: two males remained until 26th May, and one female on 3rd June.

Scotland, N Two localities: (1) two males and a female on 24th April; (2) female for at least a week around 19th May.

Some slightly encouraging signs from northern Scotland, building on last year's pair, which followed two blank years. Summering in eastern England has occurred in the past (e.g. in 1989). This followed successful breeding in Anglesey the year before, so such birds should never be dismissed out of hand.

Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*

61 localities: population estimate of 76-89 potential pairs.

Shetland Ten sites surveyed, none occupied.

Flow Country 310 sites surveyed, 32 occupied, holding peak counts of 32 pairs and 36 females, with population estimate of 32-36 potential pairs.

West & South Scotland 121 sites surveyed, 21 occupied, holding 32 pairs and 41 females, with population estimate of 32-41 potential pairs.

Islay Four sites surveyed, two occupied, holding 12 pairs, with population estimate of 12 potential pairs.

	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
No. localities	25	35	15	36	7	9	14	32	38	47	61
Confirmed (pairs)	2	8	29	14	8	6	9	9	16	5	n.c.
Possible/probable (pairs)	72	92	33	76	32	23	21	62	72	79	76-89
Max. total (pairs)	74	100	62	90	40	29	30	71	88	84	89

The results shown above are taken from those of the full survey of this species carried out in summer 1995 and written up for publication (Underhill *et al.* 1998). The areas used in the survey report differ from those conventionally used by the Panel, with 'Flow Country' equating to Caithness and Sutherland (Scotland, N & W), while 'West & South Scotland' includes Inverness, Ross & Cromarty and Argyll (also Scotland, N & W) and Tayside (Scotland, Mid).

The survey also included Ireland, where 111 pairs were present on just three sites. The previous best estimate of breeding pairs in Britain was about 100 in the mid 1980s, so, provided that that estimate was reasonably accurate, there appears to have been a marked decline. The Irish population declined steeply in the 1970s, from about 170-180 pairs in 1967 to about 95-111 pairs in the early 1980s, but has since remained stable.

The survey highlighted the lack of protection afforded to the breeding sites of this small population and makes recommendations for further research and conservation. (See also page 405.) The Panel is grateful to the senior author of the report for making the results available ahead of publication.

Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*

Breeding occurs predominantly in one extensive nestbox scheme in Scotland, for which only sample data are available, so there is no longer an estimate of the total number of breeding pairs. Increasing numbers are summering elsewhere, with breeding proved at three other Scottish sites, plus breeding by a released/escaped pair in England.

England, SE One locality.

HERTFORDSHIRE One locality: injured female summered.

England, E Two localities.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE One locality: female in June. NORTHAMPTONSHIRE One locality: immature male summered.

England, Central Four localities.

DERBYSHIRE One locality: two summering females, both presumed injured. LEICESTERSHIRE Three localities: (1) two females to 3rd May; (2) male and two females throughout July; (3) female until 23rd May. NOTTINGHAMSHIRE One locality: immature male and adult female all summer.

England, N One locality.

LANCASHIRE One locality: released female seen with four young in June.

Wales One locality.

ANGLESEY One locality: female on 19th May.

Scotland, S Two localities.

BORDERS One locality: pair present and possibly bred, with female last seen 13th June and male on 2nd July. LOTHIAN One locality: female summered.

Scotland, Mid Seven localities.

TAYSIDE Seven localities: (1) female with six young; (2) pair bred in nestbox, but failed; (3) pair seen copulating 4th May, no further evidence of breeding; (4)-(7) from one to five singles during summer.

Scotland, N & W Three localities.

HIGHLAND Three localities: (1) 39 pairs attempted to nest in boxes, 15 of which were successful, while 24 failed to hatch any eggs; (2) 19 pairs successful in 46 boxes checked, with total 204 eggs laid and 159 young fledged; also two or three pairs bred in natural sites; (3) female with four young in July (apparently also bred here in 1994; not included in 1994 Report).

The results from Highland Region refer to a sample only of the many boxes available to the species. Elsewhere, the successful breeding in Tayside and suspected breeding in Borders continue a very slow expansion from this core area.

Honey-buzzard *Pernis apivorus*

23 localities in ten counties: 9-30 pairs breeding; minimum of 13 young reared.

Great Britain 23 localities: (1)-(5) single pairs each raised two young; (6)-(8) single pairs each raised one young, two adult males and single immature male and female also present at one site; (9) pair bred but apparently failed; (10) pair and single present and behaviour suggested breeding but no young seen; (11) pair and male, but no young reared; (12)-(14) single pairs in breeding season; (15) up to four birds, but perhaps involving two pairs already accounted for; (16) one, probably two, birds; (17)-(19) singles in suitable habitat; (20)-(23) singles on single dates only, perhaps migrants.

	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
Confirmed (pairs)	1	1	1	1	2	3	2	8	6	9	9
Max. total (pairs)	4	6	7	10	20	19	22	26	27	28	30

Another small increase to new record totals of both pairs and young reared. The Panel is aware that the above information is incomplete, with no reports received from two known breeding areas, and appeals to all observers to submit their records for safekeeping.

Red Kite *Milvus milvus*

124 wild pairs reared 117 young, and 39 released pairs reared 81 young.

Wales 124 pairs were proved to breed, of which 79 were successful, rearing 117 young; all three totals were new records, for the second successive year. In addition, there were a further 20 non-breeding pairs, while 108 unmated individuals were identified during the spring. The total population was estimated as at least 394 in April and 513 in August, an increase of 38 since August 1993. (The Panel's thanks go to Peter Davis for his detailed report. His work is funded by the RSPB and the Welsh Office 'Kite Country Initiative', with additional support from the Countryside Council for Wales.)

	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
Total pairs	54	58	59	68	71	84	92	102	115	136	144
Breeding pairs	43	40	44	49	54	65	76	84	104	111	124
Successful pairs	19	23	27	27	33	47	41	60	61	70	79
Young reared	25	29	39	38	49	73	62	96	82	99	117
Young/successful pair	1.3	1.3	1.4	1.4	1.5	1.6	1.5	1.6	1.3	1.4	1.5

The re-established breeding populations in England and Scotland continue to make excellent progress, and the Panel is grateful to Ian Evans (JNCC) and Lorcan O'Toole (RSPB) for the following information.

England The number of breeding pairs increased by two to 24, of which 22 were successful, fledging no fewer than 55 young (mean 2.5 young/successful pair). There were also two non-breeding pairs.

Scotland The increase here was larger, from eight to 15 breeding pairs, of which 11 were successful, rearing 26 young, double last year's total (mean 2.4 young/successful pair). There were two non-breeding pairs.

ENGLAND						SCOTLAND				
	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995		1992	1993	1994	1995
Total pairs	2	7	12	22	26	Total pairs	2	8	11	17
Breeding pairs	2	4	9	20	24	Breeding pairs	1	5	8	15
Successful pairs	0	4	8	17	22	Successful pairs	1	3	6	11
Young reared	0	9	14	37	55	Young reared	1	7	13	26
Young/successful pair	-	2.2	1.8	2.2	2.5	Young/successful pair	1.0	1.0	2.2	2.4

The history of the re-establishment of the Red Kite in England and Scotland has recently been described in detail (Evans *et al.* 1997).

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*

Re-establishment.

Scotland Ten territories were occupied by territory-holding pairs, including two by trios of a male with two females. Nine clutches were laid, and seven young were reared from five broods, both equalling previous highest totals. One nest failed when the young were small, one during hatching, and two during incubation. Two Scottish-bred pairs, one of which bred unsuccessfully last year, attempted to breed, but neither was successful. In addition, a territory was occupied by two adults, though they were probably not paired, and another by a single female. A further six chicks were brought from Norway, reared in captivity and released.

	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
Breeding pairs	4	5	6	6	6	9	8	9	6	8	9
Successful pairs	1	1	2	1	3	2	4	4	4	4	5
Young reared	1	2	3	2	5	2	7	7	5	5	7
Young/successful pair	1.0	2.0	1.5	2.0	1.7	1.0	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.4

A slightly better year than 1994, but four failures out of nine remains disappointingly high. The Panel is grateful to the Sea Eagle Project Team for providing it with information. The Project is supported jointly by the JNCC, SNH and the RSPB.

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

151 males and 156 females bred, rearing at least 277 young.

Great Britain The figures for definitely breeding males and females shown in the table should be treated with caution as not all sex ratios are known in polygamous situations. Furthermore, the information received from one important area did not record the sex ratio, so the total for males is probably an overestimate. The number of young reported to have fledged is again a new record.

	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
Breeding males	29	26	40	42	58	73	83	92	84	114	151
Breeding females	31	32	46	56	66	110	91	107	110	129	156
Young	86	82	126	145	172	145	198	229	244	255	277

The number of breeding adults has increased substantially, though production per pair has fallen. (The Panel wishes to thank Bob Image for the continued provision of detailed information on this species.) A paper on the current status of the Marsh Harrier in Britain has recently been published (Underhill-Day 1998).

Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus*

Male bred with female Hen Harrier *C. cyaneus*.

Scotland, N One locality: male paired to female Hen Harrier; clutch of five eggs laid, but eggs disappeared, probably taken by a predator.

The only previous occurrence of this species in these reports was in 1993, when a second-summer bird was seen displaying to a female Hen Harrier. This breeding record, though unsuccessful, is a first for Britain and is comparable with the successful breeding with Montagu's Harrier *C. pygargus* in Finland in 1993 (*Brit. Birds* 88: 268).

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*

14 localities: eight males and nine females reared a minimum of 26 young.

England, SW Nine localities: (1) pair fledged four young; (2) pair fledged two young from second clutch, having lost its first, and additional male present; (3) pair fledged at least one young; (4)-(7) single pair in suitable habitat or at traditional site, but no breeding evidence; (8)(9) male regular during summer.

England, SE One locality: single reported.

England, E Three localities: (1) three males and four females fledged 12 young; (2) pair fledged four young; (3) pair fledged three young.

England, N One locality: male seen.

	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
No. localities	9	10	10	14	15	9	14	12	8	15	14
Breeding males	3	7	4	5	4	8	5	7	5	7	8
Other males	5	3	4	4	5	4	3	2	2	9	8
Breeding females	3	7	5	6	6	11	7	8	6	12	9
Other females	5	3	4	4	7	2	6	4	1	11	4
Young	7	13	13	17	14	20	14	12	9	13	26

The most successful year, since the Panel was formed, for production of young, though from fewer nests than last year. The surge in numbers in

eastern England in 1994 was not sustained, but breeding in southwest England was better than for the last three years.

Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*

At least 270 localities or areas: 249-319 pairs breeding.
England and Wales Up to 220 localities in 34 counties: up to 188 pairs bred, of which 163 were reported as successful; an additional 63 pairs and 11 singles were reported.
Scotland At least 50 localities in four regions: 41 pairs known to have bred, of which 33 were successful; an additional seven pairs and a single were reported.

	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
No. counties	20	31	31	31	23	30	36	34	35	33	38
Confirmed (pairs)	36	57	54	108	112	93	158	150	199	145	249
Possible/probable (pairs)	39	59	40	68	54	79	71	93	100	80	70
Max. total (pairs)	75	116	94	176	166	172	229	243	299	225	319

The increase in the number of confirmed pairs partly reflects better reporting to the Panel. Raptor Study Groups and a small number of individual observers make a considerable contribution to knowledge of the numbers and distribution of this species, and the Panel is grateful to them for the summary information provided.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

99 pairs: 92 pairs laid eggs, rearing 144 young.
England, SW One locality: single from late May to September.
England, Central One locality: one or two regularly in April.
England, N Two localities: (1) single from 19th May to 30th June, with second bird visiting intermittently; (2) male from 10th May to 5th September.
Scotland, S One locality: one in May and three, briefly, in July.
Scotland A total of 99 occupied nests was found. It was thought that there might be a further three pairs breeding whose nests were not located. Eggs were laid in 92 nests, of which 77 hatched young and 73 reared 144 young. All except the last figure are new record totals.

	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
Pairs	34	42	50	53	58	62	73	76	88	95	99
Successful pairs	22	24	30	38	38	44	44	48	56	69	73
Young reared	53	48	56	81	81	90	82	101	111	146	144
Young/successful pair	2.4	2.0	1.9	2.1	2.1	2.0	1.9	2.1	2.0	2.1	2.0

A further increase in the number of pairs and successful pairs, but no corresponding increase in the number of young reared. No fewer than six clutches were stolen, a very disappointing resurgence. Other failures were caused by strong winds and by bad weather during the critical hatching period. (The Panel is grateful for the information supplied to it by Roy Dennis and his associates.)

Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

Minimum of 613 localities: 161-430 pairs breeding.
England, SW 60-127 pairs.
AVON 4-7 pairs. **CORNWALL** 2 pairs. **DEVON** Minimum. 10 pairs. **DORSET** 11-26 pairs.

GLOUCESTERSHIRE 1 pair. HAMPSHIRE 28-46 pairs. SOMERSET 0-5 pairs. WILTSHIRE 4-30 pairs. **England, SE** 44-195 pairs, 60 young reported.

BEDFORDSHIRE 1 pair. BERKSHIRE 2-9 pairs. BUCKINGHAMSHIRE 4-15 pairs. ESSEX 13-50 pairs. GREATER LONDON 6 pairs. HERTFORDSHIRE 2-48 pairs. KENT 5-10 pairs. OXFORDSHIRE 2 pairs. SURREY 8-29 pairs. SUSSEX 1-25 pairs.

England, E 19-48 pairs.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE 1-2 pairs. HUNTINGDON & PETERBOROUGH 2-5 pairs. LINCOLNSHIRE 0-9 pairs. NORFOLK 11-12 pairs. SUFFOLK 5-20 pairs.

England, Central 32-48 pairs.

DERBYSHIRE 24-29 pairs. LEICESTERSHIRE 3-11 pairs. NOTTINGHAMSHIRE 3 pairs. SHROPSHIRE 2 pairs. WORCESTERSHIRE 0-3 pairs.

England, N 1-5 pairs.

CHESHIRE 1 pair. NORTHUMBERLAND 0-3 pairs. YORKSHIRE 0-1 pair.

Wales 4-7 pairs.

BRECONSHIRE 1-3 pairs. GWENT 3-4 pairs.

Scotland, Mid 0-1 pair.

ANGUS 0-1 pair.

	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
Confirmed (pairs)	98	91	108	103	140	154	159	255	152	170	161
Possible/probable (pairs)	148	202	164	226	250	287	310	327	341	330	269
Max. total (pairs)	246	293	272	329	390	441	469	582	493	500	430

As this species has become commoner, so the reporting of its numbers has become less accurate. Equally, the reporting of breeding success and numbers of young reared has also become more sporadic and it is no longer sufficiently meaningful to include the latter in the table. The decline seen in 1995 is much more apparent than real. The successful breeding in Scotland in 1994 was not repeated.

Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix*

At least 320 localities: 15-515 pairs breeding.

England, SW 61 localities: 4-108 pairs.

AVON Three localities: pair bred, one other pair and 17 singing males. CORNWALL Three localities: six singing males. DEVON Ten localities: pair bred and nine singing males. DORSET Up to 28 localities: 28 singing males. GLOUCESTERSHIRE Three localities: ten singing males. HAMPSHIRE Eight localities: two pairs bred and ten singing males. SOMERSET Six localities: one pair and 22 singing males.

England, SE 42 localities: 3-64 pairs.

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE Nine localities: pair bred and 13 singing males. ESSEX Eight localities: 12 singing males. HERTFORDSHIRE Five localities: five singing males. KENT Ten localities: two pairs bred and 21 singing males. SURREY Three localities: three singing males. SUSSEX Seven localities: seven singing males.

England, E 96 localities: 5-139 pairs.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE 18 localities: two pairs bred and 16 singing males. HUNTINGDON & PETERBOROUGH Four localities: five singing males. LINCOLNSHIRE Eight localities: two pairs bred and 13 singing males. NORFOLK 41 localities: pair bred and 63 singing males. NORTHAMPTONSHIRE Ten localities: 15 singing males. SUFFOLK 15 localities: 22 singing males.

England, Central 54 localities: 2-115 pairs.

DERBYSHIRE 16 localities: 18 singing males. LEICESTERSHIRE Nine localities: 23 singing males. NOTTINGHAMSHIRE Eight localities: 38 singing males. SHROPSHIRE 12 localities: two pairs bred, and 17 singing males. STAFFORDSHIRE Five localities: 13 singing males. WORCESTERSHIRE Four localities: four singing males.

England, N 24 localities: 1-30 pairs.

CHESHIRE Two localities: two singing males. GREATER MANCHESTER Six localities: six singing males. LANCASHIRE Seven localities: eight singing males. NORTHUMBERLAND Eight localities: pair bred and nine singing males. YORKSHIRE One locality: four singing males.

Wales Six localities: 0-6 pairs.

ANGLESEY One locality: one singing male. BRECONSHIRE One locality: one flushed. CLWYD One locality: one singing male. GLAMORGAN Three localities: three singing males.

Scotland, S 17 localities: 0-31 pairs.

AYRSHIRE Two localities: two singing males. BORDERS 12 localities: pair and 25 singing males. LOTHIAN Three localities: three singing males.

Scotland, Mid 13 localities: 0-14 pairs.

ABERDEEN Seven localities: seven singing males. FIFE Six localities: seven singing males.

Scotland, N & W Seven localities: 0-8 pairs.

ARGYLL One locality: one singing male. INVERNESS Two localities: three singing males. ORKNEY One locality: one singing male. ROSS & CROMARTY Three localities: three singing males.

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
No. localities	84	152	130	904	255	88	319	172	359	320
Confirmed (pairs)	1	1	5	27	13	2	9	1	8	15
Possible/probable (pairs)	110	245	158	1,628	364	105	481	202	604	500
Max. total (pairs)	111	246	163	1,655	377	107	490	203	612	515

Another good year for the species, if slightly below the total for 1994. There was also a more northerly bias, with higher numbers in central England and in Scotland and fewer in southern England.

Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana*

Eight localities: 0-12 pairs breeding.

England, E Three localities: (1) pair; (2) two singing males; (3) singing male.

Wales Two localities: (1) singing male; (2) juvenile from 24th September to 3rd October.

Scotland, N & W Three localities: (1) four singing males; (2) singing male; (3) single seen on 3rd and 14th May, but not apparently heard singing.

	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
No. counties	2	3	4	5	7	6	5	9	12	4	5
No. localities	2	3	7	6	14	14	7	12	19	5	8
No. singing	3	4	18	10	21	21	14	14	31	11	10

A slight improvement on 1994, but still a poor year. The juvenile seen in Wales in the autumn was nowhere near the locality with the singing male in spring.

Corn Crake *Crex crex*

25 'localities'; 551 males calling.

England, SE KENT One singing male, not heard after 23rd June.

England, E CAMBRIDGESHIRE One singing male from 11th to 20th July. **SUFFOLK** Two singing males on 4th July, one on 5th.

England, N CUMBRIA One on 1st July. **LANCASHIRE** One singing for at least a week in June.

Wales PEMBROKE Single singing males at two localities in April and July.

Scotland, S BORDERS Singing male on 27th June.

Scotland, N & W: Mainland

ROSS & CROMARTY One singing male on several nights in July. **SUTHERLAND** At least two singing males at one locality, and single singing males at two others.

Scotland, N & W: Islands

Totals of singing males: HIGHLAND - INNER HEBRIDES 9 (Skye 9), STRATHCLYDE - INNER HEBRIDES 207 (Coll 37, Tiree 140, Iona 4, Colonsay & Oronsay 12, Islay 14), ORKNEY 39, WESTERN ISLES 282 (Lewis 96, Harris 8, North Uist 53, Benbècula 23, South Uist 58, Barra & Watersay 44).

A total of 537 singing males was found by RSPB, SNH and SCU teams on the Scottish islands this year, compared with 463 in 1994 and 446 in 1993. This brings the total back almost to the 540 reported in 1988. Although all the islands listed above showed an increase between 1994 and 1995, four other islands (Canna, Eigg, Muck and Mull), which had one or two individuals each in 1994, had none in 1995. In addition, Berneray and Rum, which had Corn Crakes in 1993, have now gone two years without any.

The RSPB/SNH/SCU Corncrake Initiative operated for the fourth year in Scotland, with increased numbers of farmers and crofters accepting payments to delay mowing their hay or silage fields until after 31st July, with an additional payment available for mowing in a Corn Crake-friendly manner, in strips or from the centre outwards. The Initiative, and other current conservation actions in Britain and Ireland, were reviewed in detail by Williams *et al.* (1997).

Common Crane *Grus grus*

One extensive locality.

United Kingdom Four pairs; at least one bred. Although the eggs are thought to have hatched, no young were reared and chicks were believed to have been taken by a predator.

Once again, no young were reared, for the seventh year running.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*

One locality: single male.

England, E One locality: male present all year.

Although only a single bird was present, it was in suitable breeding habitat, so this record is worth noting.

Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*

At least 25 localities: 613-615 pairs reared a minimum of 149 young.

England, SE 11 localities

ESSEX Five localities: (1) 36 pairs fledged 24 young; (2) eight pairs bred, success unknown; (3) six pairs bred, success unknown; (4)(5) two pairs bred at each, success unknown.

KENT Five localities: (1) 76 pairs present, but eggs hatched in only 21 nests, and ten pairs fledged 16 young; (2) 33 pairs bred, but only two young reared, with major chick loss due to failure of food supply; (3) 17 pairs bred, but only 14 young fledged, from five nests; (4) four pairs bred, two hatched, but no young fledged; (5) three pairs bred, but no young thought to have fledged. Pairs at localities 4 and 5 had probably already failed at one of the other sites.

SUSSEX One locality: five birds present May-July, but no sign of breeding.

England, E 14 localities.

NORFOLK Ten localities: (1) 63 pairs bred, but only three young fledged; (2) 45 pairs bred, success unknown; (3) 40 pairs bred, 40 young fledged; (4) at least 28 pairs bred, 70 clutches laid, but only three young fledged owing to high level of predation by Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes*; (5) 22 pairs fledged at least 15 young; (6) six pairs bred, success unknown; (7) four pairs bred, but no young fledged, and one other pair; (8) three pairs bred, success unknown; (9) three pairs bred, but all nests preyed on by Red Fox; (10) three pairs bred, but nests flooded.

SOUTH HUMBERSIDE One locality: four pairs bred, 14 young fledged, one other pair simply made scrape.
SUFFOLK Three localities: (1) 141 pairs fledged just 21 young, with gull predation the main cause of loss; (2) 80 pairs fledged just 12 young, with gull predation and bad weather the main causes of loss; (3) 30 pairs bred, fledging 25 young.

	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
No. localities	14	15	18	27	24	21	21	29	25	29	25
Confirmed (pairs)	269	255	341	389	521	355	448	492	436	623	613
Young reared (min.)	245	227	315	136	150	200	305	336	347	181	149

Although the number of young reared was not reported from all sites, and no reports were received from at least one regular, though small, site, this was clearly a disastrous year for production. Poor weather at key times in the summer had an adverse effect, but predation by, especially, gulls and Red Foxes was mainly to blame.

Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedichenus*

Seven counties: 165-174 pairs.
England, SW & SE Four counties: 56 pairs made a minimum 88 breeding attempts, fledging 61 young; five other pairs.
England, E Three counties: 109 pairs made 164 breeding attempts, from which 125 hatched young, at least 103 fledging, plus four other pairs and a single.

	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
Confirmed (pairs)	68	103	137	126	126	139	139	155	146	141	165
Possible/probable (pairs)	47	12	0	3	17	10	16	4	16	32	9
Max. total (pairs)	115	115	137	129	143	149	155	159	162	173	174
Min. no. of young fledged	n/a	n/a	n/a	62	79	112	123	111	101	91	164

The best year to date, with only a modest increase in the number of confirmed pairs, but these producing by far the largest number of fledged young yet recorded. The capacity shown by this species for re-laying following loss of the first clutch was well demonstrated this year. (The Panel wishes to thank Dr Rhys Green, RSPB, for his assistance in compiling the data.)

Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus*

One locality: two pairs probably breeding (excluding those in main Scottish breeding areas).
England, N One locality.
CUMBRIA One locality: two pairs in May.

The Panel seeks records only if away from the main breeding range, which lies north of a line from the Firth of Clyde to the Firth of Tay, and accepts that at least some of the birds on hilltops in southern Scotland and northern England will be on passage. A paper examining the history of Dotterel breeding in northern England will shortly be submitted to *British Birds*.

Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*

One locality: 0-2 pairs.
Scotland, N & W One locality: two males and one female were present at a traditional site in late May and early June.

	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
No. localities	2	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Confirmed (pairs)	0	1	4	2	2	1	0	1	2	0	0
Possible/probable (pairs)	2	2	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	2	2
Max. total (pairs)	2	3	5	3	3	2	3	2	3	2	2

The minimum amount of monitoring of this species is carried out, just enough to establish presence.

Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima*

One locality: one pair bred.

Scotland, N & W One locality: one young seen in mid July.

	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
No. localities	3	1	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	1
Confirmed (pairs)	1	1	3	2	2	1	3	1	1	4	1
Possible/probable (pairs)	2	1	0	0	2	0	1	1	0	0	0
Max. total (pairs)	3	2	3	2	4	1	4	2	1	4	1

As with the preceding species, only minimal monitoring is carried out and confirmed breeding records such as this one are largely fortuitous.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*

Seven localities: lekking at three and breeding may have occurred at one.

England, SE Two localities

SUSSEX Two localities: (1) two males and two females in breeding plumage; (2) male in breeding plumage, with two females.

England, E One locality.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE One locality: two males, but no lekking.

England, Central One locality.

STAFFORDSHIRE One locality: two males and five females, some lekking, but site too dry.

England, N Three localities.

LANCASHIRE One locality: up to 50 birds lekking, two males and one female probably bred.

NORTHUMBERLAND One locality: up to 12 males and three females lekking, but very doubtful that breeding took place. YORKSHIRE One locality: up to 45 present, with two or three females staying into spring, but no evidence of breeding.

	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
No. localities	8	7	16	14	15	8	9	21	10	13	7
No. leks	3	3	10	6	6	1	4	7	7	3	3
Nests/broods	0	1	1	1	1	3	7	0	0	2	0

Reported from fewer localities than for some years, and the number of leks remained low. No breeding was confirmed, but was probable at one site.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

13 localities: 28-35 pairs breeding.

England, SW Two localities.

SOMERSET Two localities: (1) three adults; (2) single adult.

England, SE Three localities.

KENT Three localities: (1) three pairs laid, one clutch hatched, but no young fledged; (2) one

pair hatched one young, not known whether it fledged; (3) pair bred, success unknown.

England, E Three localities.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE. Two localities: (1) 14 pairs bred and fledged at least ten young; (2) five pairs bred, with unknown number of young fledging. NORFOLK One locality: two pairs bred, fledging at least three young.

England, N Two localities.

LANCASHIRE One locality: pair displaying and copulating at potential breeding site.

NORTH YORKSHIRE One locality: pair in June, but no sign of breeding.

Scotland, N & W Three localities.

ORKNEY One locality: adult in May and displaying, but no other evidence of breeding.

SHETLAND Three localities: (1) pair reared two young; (2) pair reared at least one young; (3) adult present.

	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
No. localities	11	19	13	17	14	16	18	24	16	22	15
Confirmed (pairs)	22	23	28	36	34	33	28	20	28	20	28
Possible/probable (pairs)	17	24	12	28	22	33	25	38	5	16	7
Max. total (pairs)	39	47	40	64	56	66	53	58	33	36	35

A reduced number of sites, but the number of confirmed pairs returned to earlier levels, with at least 16 young fledged. Breeding records in Scotland are thought to involve the Icelandic race.

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*

No reports away from Orkney and Shetland.

For the fourth year running, no reports were received from areas away from the regular breeding area in the Northern Isles. We repeat our appeal for records of any summering or displaying elsewhere in the UK.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

Six localities: 7-11 pairs bred.

Scotland, N & W Six localities: (1) three pairs bred and hatched young, but number fledged unknown; (2) two pairs bred and fledged at least three young; (3) two pairs bred successfully; (4) two pairs present throughout season; (5)(6) single adults in mid May.

	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
No. localities	3	2	3	4	6	2	2	4	4	8	6
Confirmed (pairs)	2	2	3	3	2	1	1	1	2	6	7
Possible/probable (pairs)	1	1	1	1	4	1	1	5	6	5	4
Max. total (pairs)	3	3	4	4	6	2	2	6	8	11	11

Although the number of sites dropped back, the number of confirmed pairs increased slightly on last year's high count.

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*

Seven localities: 33 breeding males reared at least 50 young at two sites.

Scotland, N & W Seven localities: (1) 31 breeding males, and 50 young were fledged; (2) two breeding males, unknown number of young reared, plus a third male; (3) three males and five females, but breeding not proved; (4) two males and two females present to mid July, but no evidence of breeding; (5) two females; (6) male in early spring; (7) female, but not at former regular site nearby.

The combined total of sites 1 and 2 is the highest since 1968 and reflects the success of the RSPB's management work on Fetlar, Shetland, recently reviewed by O'Brien *et al.* (1997). Reports from other areas were more than usual, but did not include any breeding.

Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*

14 localities: 18-28 pairs, plus hybrid pair breeding.

England, SW Three localities: (1) pair bred, success unknown; (2) three pairs, but not known whether breeding took place; (3) pair holding territory.

England, SE Seven localities: (1) five pairs bred, but all failed because of high tides, and immature pair; (2) three pairs, two definitely bred, fledging total of two young; (3) three pairs bred unsuccessfully; (4) three pairs bred, but success unknown; (5) pair bred, but failed; (6) pair summered; (7) pair present April to June.

England, E Three localities: (1) three pairs bred, but failed; (2)(3) single pairs.

England, Central One locality: second-summer male paired to adult female Black-headed Gull *L. ridibundus* bred and fledged one hybrid young.

	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
No. localities	3	5	3	9	5	10	13	15	14	16	14
Confirmed (pairs)	3	1	1	5	6	11	15	19	15	16	18
Possible/probable (pairs)	5	4	2	10	3	5	8	12	17	14	10
Max. total (pairs)	8	5	3	15	9	16	23	31	32	30	28

There has been a levelling-off in the number of localities and breeding pairs, with poor productivity this year because of high tides and predation.

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus cachinnans*

One locality: pair bred.

England, SW One locality: pair bred, but probably failed as young seen being fed by adult on 14th May, but not subsequently, despite checking; second pair present.

The first confirmed breeding in the United Kingdom. A hybrid pairing, with Lesser Black-backed Gull *L. fuscus*, was reported in 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 88: 84).

Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis*

One locality: female bred with Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis*.

England, N One locality.

NORTHUMBERLAND One locality: female bred with Sandwich Tern, laid one egg which was lost to unknown causes, a second clutch of one hatched, but the chick vanished at five days old.

A simpler story than in 1994, with no sign of the hybrid bird which bred and produced young that year.

Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii*

15 localities: 72-85 pairs breeding, fledging at least 66 young.

England, SW Two localities: (1) two pairs bred, but success unknown; (2) three adults, but no breeding activity.

England, E Two localities: (1) pair probably bred, with clutch of two eggs thought to be of this species, plus one adult; (2) pair and adult present, but no breeding attempt.

England, N Five localities: (1) 38 pairs bred, rearing up to 40 young; (2) two pairs bred and probably reared young, three other pairs; (2) pair bred; (3) two pairs made scrapes, but apparently did not lay; (4) three seen regularly at suitable site.

Wales Two localities: (1) ten pairs bred and fledged eight young; (2) pair, but did not breed.

Scotland, Mid Two localities: (1)(2) total of 11 pairs bred at the two sites and fledged 13 young.

Northern Ireland Two localities: (1)(2) total of eight pairs bred at the two sites and fledged five young.

	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
No. localities	10	13	17	15	13	15	18	14	15
Confirmed (pairs)	169	164	172	93	52	62	84	74	72
Possible/probable (pairs)	164	33	5	31	5	10	21	24	13
Max. total (pairs)	333	197	177	124	57	72	105	98	85

A further worrying fall from the peak of 1993, with birds absent or not breeding at four former regular sites. Several new sites were used, however, with one pair at a former breeding site in Mid Scotland not occupied for over 40 years; rings indicated that both birds had fledged from the main Irish colony at Rockabill. In Northern Ireland, pairs bred successfully for the first time in two years at two sites. Despite the lower numbers of confirmed pairs, the spread to new or formerly used sites is encouraging.

Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*

Three localities: three singles.

England, Central One locality: single seen in late May and early June.

Scotland, N & W Two localities: (1) singing bird in May, but not relocated in June; (2) single in early August in area where has bred in previous years.

	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
No. localities	9	9	10	9	8	6	6	1	6	1	3
Confirmed (pairs)	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	0
Possible/probable (pairs)	8	8	9	9	7	6	5	2	5	1	3
Max. total (pairs)	9	9	10	10	8	6	6	2	6	1	3

Not quite so bad as in 1994, and with a welcome return to Scotland, although the population, if it can be called that, remains at a very low ebb.

Wood Lark *Lullula arborea*

261-847 pairs breeding.

England, SW 234 breeding pairs or singing males.

DEVON Six areas: at least 16 singing males. **DORSET** Ten localities: 22 singing males found in partial survey. **GLOUCESTERSHIRE** One locality: singing male. **HAMPSHIRE** Total of 194 pairs or singing males counted or estimated, but coverage incomplete. **WILTSHIRE** One locality: pair. **England, SE** 126 breeding pairs or singing males.

BEDFORDSHIRE One locality: breeding pair and singing male. **BERKSHIRE** Four areas: 14 breeding pairs or singing males. **BUCKINGHAMSHIRE** One locality: two singing males. **KENT** One locality: pair plus singing male. **SURREY** Whole county: 78 breeding pairs or singing males. **SUSSEX** Whole county: 28 breeding pairs or singing males.

England, E 473 breeding pairs or singing males.

LINCOLNSHIRE Whole county: nine breeding pairs or singing males. **NORFOLK** Two main areas: 198 breeding pairs or singing males. **SUFFOLK** Two main areas: 266 breeding pairs or singing males.

England, Central 14 breeding pairs or singing males.

UNNAMED COUNTY Three localities: 13 breeding pairs or singing males. **STAFFORDSHIRE** One locality: pair in suitable habitat.

	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
No. counties	9	13	11	12	10	14	12	14	13	13	16
Confirmed (pairs)	5	47	28	88	156	64	39	124	213	100	261
Possible/probable (pairs)	122	181	165	157	54	272	303	535	408	524	586
Max. total (pairs)	127	228	193	245	210	336	362	659	621	624	847

The distinction between confirmed and possible/probable is not always made in some reports, so the breakdown of the maximum total pairs should be treated with caution. There has been a further increase. The true picture of this species' abundance will be revealed by the results of the census in 1997.

Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*

Red-spotted race *L. s. svecica*.

Two localities: pair bred, plus one singing male.

Scotland, N & W Two localities: (1) pair bred and fledged three young; (2) singing male on 8th June.

Only the second confirmed breeding record of this species in the United Kingdom, and the first instance of successful breeding. The previous record was in 1968, when a female was flushed from a nest and eggs, also in northern Scotland, though no male was seen and the fate of the nest was unknown (*Brit. Birds* 61: 524-525). The singing male was a long distance from the breeding site.

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*

58 localities: 19-82 pairs breeding.

England, SW One locality: pair breeding.

DORSET One locality: pair fledged four young in two broods.

England, SE 33 localities: 7-47 pairs breeding.

BEDFORDSHIRE One locality: singing first-summer male. BERKSHIRE One locality: two singing males. ESSEX Two localities: (1) pair and singing male; (2) pair. HERTFORDSHIRE One locality: pair. KENT Ten localities: (1) pair fledged seven young in two broods; (2) pair fledged four young; (3) three pairs; (4) pair and four singing males; (5)(6) single pairs; (7) two females; (8)-(10) single singing males. LONDON Nine localities: (1) pair fledged four young in two broods, one other pair; (2) pair fledged one young; (3)(4) single pairs bred; (5) pair and singing male; (6) four singing males; (7)(8) single juveniles seen in June; (9) single singing male. SURREY Six localities: (1) pair fledged two young; (2)(3) single pairs; (4)-(6) single singing males. SUSSEX Three localities: (1) pair; (2)(3) single singing males.

England, E Nine localities: 5-15 pairs breeding.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE One locality: female in June. NORFOLK Three localities: (1) pair bred; (2)(3) single singing males. NORTHAMPTONSHIRE One locality: pair bred and two singing males. SUFFOLK Four localities: (1) two pairs bred, third pair probably bred; (2) at least three singing males, six juveniles ringed; (3) pair bred; (4) pair in July.

England, Central Eight localities: 4-11 pairs breeding.

DERBYSHIRE Four localities: (1) two pairs bred; (2) pair bred; (3) pair, but no breeding evidence; (4) singing male. LEICESTERSHIRE One locality: singing male. NOTTINGHAMSHIRE One locality: pair and two singing males. STAFFORDSHIRE Two localities: (1) pair bred; (2) female.

England, N Seven localities: 2-8 pairs breeding.

GREATER MANCHESTER Five localities: (1) male and two females fledged two broods; (2)(3) single singing males; (4) female; (5) female or juvenile in July. LANCASHIRE Two localities: (1) pair in March-April; (2) female in February-May.

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
No. localities	92	77	70	56	50	36	44	53	66	58
Confirmed (pairs)	81	46	54	36	28	23	14	32	32	19
Possible/probable (pairs)	38	63	58	46	46	46	57	44	63	63
Max. total (pairs)	119	109	118	82	74	69	71	76	95	82

A thorough survey was made of the London area in 1994, which boosted the totals for that year. In the absence of a repeat survey, numbers have fallen back to close to the 1993 level.

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*

Six localities: 1-6 pairs breeding.

England, SE One locality: one on 30th June.

England, Central One locality: one on 14th June.

England, N One locality: pair with three young.

Scotland, S Two localities: (1) bird 'alarming' on 4th June, but 'probably late migrant'; (2) moulting adult on 1st August.

Scotland, N & W One locality: pair holding territory in suitable habitat.

	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
No. localities	3	2	7	7	12	12	13	7	5	5	6
Confirmed (pairs)	0	2	1	2	3	5	2	2	2	0	1
Possible/probable (pairs)	3	0	6	5	10	7	11	8	3	5	5
Max. total (pairs)	3	2	7	7	13	12	13	11	5	5	6

A single definite breeding record after last year's gap, but still only half the number of reports of a few years ago.

Redwing *Turdus iliacus*

Nine localities: 3-14 pairs breeding.

Scotland, S One locality: singing male in early June, but apparently did not stay.

Scotland, Mid One locality: singing male.

Scotland, N & W Seven localities: (1)-(3) single pairs bred; (4) pair and four singing males; (5) two singing males; (6)(7) single singing males.

	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
No. localities	35	32	39	22	38	17	15	13	22	15	9
Confirmed (pairs)	12	20	9	10	12	6	7	9	5	4	3
Possible/probable (pairs)	23	26	41	30	39	15	13	15	22	15	11
Max. total (pairs)	35	46	50	49	51	21	20	24	27	19	14

A particularly poor year for this severely under-recorded species. In past years, many records have come from a very few people in good areas and the lower totals reflect the absence of such observations.

Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*

At least 103 localities: 15-441 breeding 'pairs'.

England, SW 6-305 'pairs'.

AVON One locality: male bred with three females, fledging 11 young. **CORNWALL** Four localities: two pairs bred and 13 singing males. **DEVON** Whole county: about 66 singing males.

DORSET Whole county: (1) 32 pairs or singing males; (2) eight singing males; (3) total of 32 singing males at other localities. GLOUCESTERSHIRE Two localities: (1)(2) two singing males at each. HAMPSHIRE Whole county: at least 98 (and probably up to 120) pairs or singing males. SOMERSET Whole county: three pairs bred, and 38 singing males at 18 localities. WILTSHIRE Three localities: eight singing males.

England, SE 15 localities: 4-25 'pairs'.
BERKSHIRE Two localities: (1) male with two females; (2) two singing males. HERTFORDSHIRE Two localities: (1) pair bred; (2) single in June. KENT Three localities: seven singing males. SUSSEX Eight localities: three pairs bred and nine singing males.

England, E 26 localities: 1-57 'pairs'.
CAMBRIDGESHIRE One locality: singing male. HUNTINGDON & PETERBOROUGH One locality: singing male. LINCOLNSHIRE One locality: singing male, first summer record for county. NORFOLK 20 localities: 51 singing males. NORTHAMPTONSHIRE One locality: pair fledged three young. SUFFOLK Two localities: two singing males.

England, Central One locality: two 'pairs' bred.
WORCESTERSHIRE One locality: male bred with two females, fledging six young.
Wales 13 localities: 2-52 'pairs'.

BRECONSHIRE One locality: one singing male. CARMARTHEN Seven localities: 19 singing males. CARDIGAN PEMBROKE One locality: 23 singing males, breeding occurred, but no details received. GLAMORGAN Two localities: two pairs bred and four singing males. GWENT Two localities: three singing males.

	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
No. counties	13	11	14	14	15	21	17	18	21	23	25
Confirmed ('pairs')	59	4	31	24	12	19	27	15	11	14	15
Possible/probable ('pairs')	190	175	156	174	196	326	214	273	306	318	426
Max. total ('pairs')	249	179	187	198	208	345	241	298	317	332	441

A further substantial increase, but still under-representing the population, which was censused in 1996 (Wotton *et al.* 1998). There is a slow but steady expansion north and west, with the first summer record for Lincolnshire and an expansion in Wales.

River Warbler *Locustella fluviatilis*

Two localities: two singing males (*Brit. Birds* 88: 516; 89: 499).
England, E CAMBRIDGESHIRE One locality: singing male at Wicken Fen, 7th to 10th July.
England, N GREATER MANCHESTER One locality: singing male at Scotsman's Flash, 11th June to at least 12th July.

Singing males reported for the third year running, the Greater Manchester bird being the longest stayer so far.

Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides*

Two localities: 0-3 pairs breeding.
England, SE One locality.
KENT One locality: two singing males in July, one for one day only.
England, E One locality.
NORFOLK One locality: one seen on 22nd April only.

	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
No. localities	12	9	16	10	13	5	13	13	5	7	2
Confirmed (pairs)	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	2	4	1	0
Possible/probable (pairs)	14	11	20	13	17	9	16	20	4	9	3
Max. total (pairs)	15	12	20	13	17	10	16	22	8	10	3

A very poor year, with none reported from Suffolk, which has regularly produced up to four singing birds.

Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*

16 localities: 2-31 pairs breeding, plus hybrid pair breeding.

England, SW Two localities: (1)(2) single singing males.

England, SE Nine localities: (1) pair bred, five other pairs present; (2) five pairs present; (3) four singing males and two presumed females; (4) three pairs; (5) three singing males; (6) pair probably bred, juvenile seen end July; (7) pair bred, but nest destroyed by reed-cutting; (8)(9) single singing males.

England, E One locality: singing male.

England, Central Four localities.

WORCESTERSHIRE Four localities: (1) male Marsh Warbler bred with female Reed Warbler *A. scirpaceus* and fledged two young; (2) two singing males; (3)(4) single singing males.

	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
No. localities	23	18	11	13	10	12	15	13	15	22	16
Confirmed (pairs)	2	12	10	6	11	13	9	9	12	0	2
Possible/probable (pairs)	40	16	11	14	11	11	23	26	46	48	29
Max. total (pairs)	42	28	21	20	22	24	32	35	58	48	31

The number of localities has dropped back to the 1993 level, while the number of pairs and singing males has fallen sharply for the second year running. The successful breeding of the hybrid pair will doubtless add to future identification difficulties.

Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*

One locality: one singing male (*Brit. Birds* 89: 517).

England, N CLEVELAND One locality: singing male, Haverton Hole, 22nd June to 4th July.

Although this is the sixth consecutive year in which males have been reported in song, the slow build-up of one (1991), three (1992), four (1993) and five (1994) has gone sharply into reverse.

Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata*

Up to 1,679 territories identified.

England, SW County totals: CORNWALL 10, DEVON 174-233, DORSET 339 (partial survey), HAMPSHIRE 150 (very incomplete), plus probably 600 in New Forest, ISLE OF WIGHT 9, SOMERSET 11, WILTSHIRE 1.

England, SE County totals: BERKSHIRE 1, KENT 1, SURREY 283, SUSSEX 38.

England, E County totals: SUFFOLK 3.

	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
No. counties	5	5	8	6	5	8	8	7	11	10	12
Confirmed (pairs)	26	15	8	26	23	55	67	63	93	n/a	n/a
Possible/probable (pairs)	368	293	239	616	499	873	634	863	1,053	1,675	1,679
Max. total (pairs)	394	308	247	639	522	928	701	926	1,146	1,675	1,679

The results of the 1994 RSPB/EN national survey were reported recently (Gibbons & Wotton 1996). Some of the figures given above are guesstimates based on the detailed work carried out that year. Real increases have, however, been reported from Devon (156-165 in 1994), Surrey (155-173)

and Sussex (34), while the first breeding for the county was reported from Kent.

Firecrest *Regulus ignicapillus*

35 localities: 4-56 pairs breeding.

England, SW 15 localities: 1-29 pairs breeding.

DEVON Two localities: (1)(2) single singing males in April, perhaps on passage.

GLOUCESTERSHIRE Four localities: (1) three singing males; (2)-(4) single singing males in

May. HAMPSHIRE Five localities: (1) pair bred, and three singing males; (2) eight singing

males, but coverage far from complete; (3) pair carrying nest material; (4)(5) single singing

males. SOMERSET One locality: singing male in May. WILTSHIRE Three localities: (1) three

singing males; (2)(3) single singing males.

England, SE 15 localities: 1-19 pairs breeding.

BERKSHIRE Three localities: (1)-(3) single singing males. BUCKINGHAMSHIRE Two localities:

(1)(2) single pairs. ESSEX One locality: singing male. KENT Two localities: (1) female

gathering nest material, and two singing males; (2) four singing males. LONDON Two

localities: (1) female with brood patch; (2) singing male. SURREY One locality: singing male.

SUSSEX Four localities: (1)-(4) single singing males.

England, E Two localities: 1-3 pairs breeding.

NORFOLK Two localities: (1) pair bred, plus singing male; (2) singing male.

England, Central Three localities: 1-5 pairs breeding.

DERBYSHIRE Two localities: (1) pair bred, second pair and singing male; (2) singing male.

LEICESTERSHIRE One locality: singing male.

	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
No. localities	24	19	37	44	52	48	19	15	20	41	35
Confirmed (pairs)	5	1	8	11	19	9	2	3	3	4	4
Possible/probable (pairs)	41	28	74	72	112	88	20	16	25	62	52
Max. total (pairs)	46	29	82	83	131	97	22	19	28	66	56

With more-limited survey work in the New Forest, numbers were bound to fall back from the peak in 1994, though still remaining about the level of the three previous years.

Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*

34 localities: 8-35 pairs breeding, rearing 7-11 young to fledging.

England, SW Two localities: (1) adult and immature males singing from late May to mid June; (2) male on 6th May, probably on passage.

England, SE Eight sites surveyed, of which three held orioles and five held none: (1)(2) single singing males in May; (3) one.

England, E 61 sites surveyed, of which 33 held none, and a minimum of eight breeding pairs found, of which three known to have fledged young; three other pairs probably bred, there were also pairs at nine other sites, and singing males or singles at eight more.

England, Central One locality: male in early July.

	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
No. localities	12	13	22	35	29	38	27	37	33	34	34
Confirmed (pairs)	4	5	11	16	15	10	16	14	14	7	8
Possible/probable (pairs)	11	11	20	25	22	32	12	23	19	28	27
Max. total (pairs)	15	17	31	41	37	42	28	37	33	35	35

A second consecutive very disappointing year. A full survey carried out in 1994 coincided with very poor weather, so it was decided by the Golden Oriole

Group, in consultation with English Nature, to repeat it in 1995. Unfortunately, 1995 turned out to be an equally bad season, because of inclement weather at critical times in the breeding cycle, with only seven to 11 young thought to have fledged (cf. 2-14 in 1994, but 31-37 in 1993, the best year to date). The Panel is most grateful for the detailed information on the eastern England population supplied by the Golden Oriole Group.

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*

One locality: 0-1 pairs breeding.

England, SW One locality: male seen in suitable habitat on 2nd June (only visit paid).

	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
No. localities	7	3	8	6	3	7	5	13	6	7	1
Confirmed (pairs)	6	4	2	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	0
Possible/probable (pairs)	6	2	11	6	6	7	4	12	6	7	1
Max. total (pairs)	12	6	13	7	6	8	5	13	6	8	1

A complete absence of records from Scotland, where a pair bred in 1994, and a continuing minimal presence in England, leaves the situation precarious in the extreme, and a far cry from the minimum 49 pairs, almost all of which bred, and 79-80 young reared, of just 20 years ago, in 1975.

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*

Eight localities: 0-8 pairs breeding.

Scotland, S Two localities: (1) pair, male singing, 13th May; (2) singing male on 7th May. It seems probable that these birds were on passage.

Scotland, Mid One locality: singing male on 30th April, probably migrant.

Scotland, N & W Five localities: (1) pair in late June, female nest-building on 1st July; (2)-(5) single singing males in suitable habitat, one found dead on road after singing for a month.

	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
No. localities	3	1	3	2	1	1	2	2	2	4	8
Confirmed (pairs)	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Possible/probable (pairs)	3	1	2	1	1	1	2	3	1	4	8
Max. total (pairs)	3	1	3	2	1	1	2	3	2	4	8

Even subtracting the probable passage birds in south and mid Scotland, this is the best year since 1984.

European Serin *Serinus serinus*

One locality: 0-1 pair.

England, SW One locality.

CORNWALL One locality: singing male on 14th April and pair on 14th May, though not seen subsequently.

Yet another poor year, with Devon, formerly the most regular area, now apparently abandoned.

Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus*

One locality: up to seven breeding adults.

Scotland, N & W One locality: seven breeding adults, at five nests, were of this species on

measurements (Svensson, 1992, *Identification Guide to European Passerines*).

The first report since 1991, when two pairs bred in North & West Scotland, following a considerable influx the previous autumn (*Brit. Birds* 84: 500). Detailed studies of breeding crossbills in the region (Marquiss, M., paper read at Scottish Ringers' Conference, 1997, and RSPB) are revealing obvious differences in, especially, bill measurements, making some individuals referable to this species, and others to Common *L. curvirostra* and Scottish Crossbills *L. scotica*. More work by the RSPB is in progress to try to sort out the complex situation now being revealed.

Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*

Five localities: 0-7 pairs breeding.

England, SE One locality: male on 17th July.

England, E One locality: up to four birds present, female seen carrying nest material.

Scotland, N & W Three localities: (1)(2) single immature males singing; (3) at least three birds staying into July.

The first sign of breeding since 1992, though inconclusive.

Lapland Longspur *Calcarius lapponicus*

One locality: one male.

Scotland, Mid One locality: male in suitable upland area in June.

The first report of this species since 1989. There was a little burst of breeding in the late 1970s, with two confirmed pairs in 1977 and 1978, 11 in 1979, then only one in 1980, since when there have been just singles in 1981 and 1989.

Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*

Eight areas or localities: up to 19 pairs breeding.

Scotland, Mid and N & W Eight areas or localities: 19 pairs or singing males.

Limited survey work in one area together with casual observations have produced the above, which represent only a small proportion of the estimated 70-100 breeding pairs in northern Scotland.

Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirlus*

42-379 breeding pairs.

England, SW

CORNWALL Seven localities: (1)(2) single pairs; (3)-(7) single singing males. DEVON The sample tetrad survey, now carried out on an annual basis by the RSPB, led to an estimate of 372 pairs as a county total; of a sample of 40 pairs, only 21 were successful (52.5%), well below last year's 67%, fledging a total of 65 young (3.1 young per successful nest).

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
Confirmed (pairs)	36	48	98	113	92	43	42
Possible/probable (pairs)	83	85	143	207	269	369	337
Max total (pairs)	119	133	241	320	361	412	379

The tetrad survey suggests a decline in numbers from the peak in 1994, while breeding success of monitored nests was also poor. (The Panel would like to thank the RSPB for the information on the sample survey in Devon.)

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Also in October 1973, there was a 'huge influx' of Rough-legged Buzzards *Buteo lagopus*, with at least 70 individuals reported (*Brit. Birds* 67: 35), and Iain Robertson found Britain's first live Ovenbird *Seiurus aurocapillus*, on Out Skerries, Shetland (*Brit. Birds* 68: 453-455).



ANNOUNCEMENTS

New addresses and phone numbers for 'British Birds'

Changes are noted in bold.

EDITORIAL *Papers, notes, letters, drawings & photographs for publication; exchange journals & county bird reports; competition entries* Dr J. T. R. Sharrock, British Birds, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ; phone & fax 01767 640340.

CIRCULATION & ADVERTISING Mrs Erika Sharrock, c/o Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ; phone & fax 01234 364366.

PROMOTION **British Birds**, The Banks, Mountfield, Robertsbridge, East Sussex TN32 5JY; phone 01580 882039; fax 01580 880541.

BACK ISSUES *Copies of single issues (except for most-recent 12 months)* David Morgan, British Birds, Whitmore, Umberleigh, North Devon EX37 9HB; phone 01769 540214.

'NEWS AND COMMENT' *Items for publication* Bob Scott & Wendy Dickson, 8 Woodlands, St Neots, Cambridgeshire PE19 1UE; phone 01480 214904; fax 01480 473009.

Other addresses are unchanged; see inside front cover.

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A new 'British Birds' jigsaw puzzle

The second in our four-puzzle set of jigsaws is now available: 'On the Look Out', depicting two Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters *Merops superciliosus* photographed by—who else?—Hanne & Jens Eriksen. Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters are certainly among the most stunningly elegant and beautiful of all birds, so there could not be a greater contrast from last month's ultra-cryptic picture (of a camouflaged female Capercaillie *Tetrao urogallus* on the forest floor, by Christer Kalenius).

To order, ask for number 2, 'On the Look Out', or just for 'the bee-eater puzzle', and send a cheque for £24.99 (or £27.99 if outside the UK) to Jigsaw, British Birds, The Banks, Mountfield, Robertsbridge, East Sussex TN32 5JY; or order by phone and credit card from 01580 880561. (Number 1, 'Mrs Invisible', is also still available at the same price.)

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MONTHLY MARATHON



The fifth stage (plate 94) was named as Dunn's Lark *Eremelauda dunni* (46%), Calandra Lark *Melanocorypha calandra* (31%), Thick-billed Lark *Rhamphocoris clotbey* (8%), Black-crowned Sparrow-lark *Eremopterix nigriceps* (4%), Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra* (4%), Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla* (4%) and Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus* (2%).

This time, the majority was not right. Only 15 entrants identified the female Black-crowned Sparrow-lark, photographed in the United Arab Emirates in April 1993 by D. Robinson.

As a result, we now have five competitors with five consecutive correct answers: Jens Lind (Denmark), Steve Mann (Nottinghamshire), Dave Nurney (Cambridgeshire), Jakob Sunesen (Denmark) and Peter Sunesen (Denmark); two with four in a row: Jørgen Munck Pedersen (Denmark) and Jean-Yves Peron (France); three with three in a row: Volker Konrad (Germany), Peter Lansdown (Glamorgan) and Steve Preddy (Avon); two each with a brace: the Revd Canon J. M. Crook (Stirlingshire) and Hannu Jännes (Finland); three with a singleton: Theo Bakker (Netherlands), Lee Gregory (Norfolk) and Roy Hargreaves (Hertfordshire); and *everybody else* is back at the start, on zero. The pressure is now on!

The winner will receive a SUNBIRD birdwatching holiday in Africa, America or Asia.



▲ 110. 'Monthly marathon.' Photo no. 146. Seventh stage in tenth 'Marathon'. Identify the species. Read the rules (*Brit. Birds* 91: 305), then send in your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th November 1998.



NEWS AND COMMENT

Compiled by Wendy Dickson and Bob Scott

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

Birdcrime and Golden Orioles

Considering the quantity of paper that passes over the 'N&c' desk, it is surprising that items rarely mesh together. Recently, however, four separate items all related to similar topics. The first to arrive was *Birdcrime* '97, the annual publication from the RSPB Species Protection Department, which has been published some four months early this year. It includes a summary of all the incidents that came to the RSPB's attention during the year, together with a summary of all prosecutions taken during 1997. The RSPB expressed concern at the increase in the number of nest robberies relating to birds of prey, which they believe may reflect an increase in the number of Peregrine Falcons *Falco peregrinus* being taken for the captive market. In view of the information coming to our notice in the following days, we checked the number of egg-collecting incidents for 1997; at 109, the total was only a fraction below the annual average of 115 since 1990.

Next to arrive through the post was a Press release from the RSPB East Anglia Office with the information that on 4th June the RSPB Warden at the Lakenheath reserve, in Suffolk, discovered that the nest of a pair of Golden Orioles *Oriolus oriolus* had been robbed: one of only some 20 pairs nesting in England this year. Although rare in the UK, the Golden Oriole is widespread and common throughout much of Eurasia. The loss of a British clutch is, therefore, of little significance in international terms. More worrying, however, is the suggestion in the Press release that careless talk by birdwatchers may have been to blame.

For many years, the British population of Golden Orioles has been monitored by the Golden Oriole Group (GOG), which works closely with the RSPB, the Rare Breeding Birds Panel and the Government's statutory advisers on conservation, English Nature. GOG tells the story that one of its members, birding on the Norfolk coast, met someone, whom he did not know, who, out of the blue, told him of a Golden Oriole's nest he had found, where to find it, what tree it was in, and so on. GOG is clearly convinced that this is the route by which egg-collectors heard of the nest and were able to steal the eggs before a proper guard could be mounted.

The final document was a copy of a letter sent to the RSPB, complaining that a rare bird on one of its reserves had not been protected adequately. Whether or not such a complaint is justified we are not in a position to say, but, quite clearly, there is a consensus that loose talk was the cause of the loss. We can only endorse the GOG statement that 'if you find a nest of any rare breeding bird, you do not broadcast its whereabouts, even to people present at that site at that time.' It goes on to say '... report the finding to the RSPB

or other responsible authority, but thereafter keep the knowledge to yourself.'

The Golden Oriole Group can be contacted on 01353-740540, and it offers a slide presentation on 'Golden Orioles in Britain—the story so far'. *Birdcrime* '97 is available (price £5.00 incl. p&p) from RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL. For information on the RSPB Lakenheath Reserve, contact RSPB East Anglia Office, Stalham House, 65 Thorpe Road, Norwich,

RSPB extends Suffolk reserve

Nature reserves are expensive to buy and expensive to manage. Every time that a new reserve is acquired by a conservation body, there is a substantial setting-up cost: staffing, office facilities, management tools and equipment, vehicles and the all-important initial expenditure to 'get the land right'. The latter may include earthworks, dams, sluices, planting schemes or a wide range of similar activities. The largest and always ongoing cost, however, is the staffing and necessary back-up.

It is in these circumstances that a reserve

extension is so much more financially attractive than a new reserve. Not only is a larger unit of land more productive ecologically, but all the necessary infrastructure is in place and the management costs can be more widely, but just as effectively, spread. It is therefore particularly good news that the RSPB's exciting (and relatively new) reserve at Lakenheath, Suffolk, has been extended by some 57 ha. A £240,000 grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund will assist the £330,000 acquisition and start-up costs.

RSPB & GCT reviews

By chance, two annual reviews arrived at the 'N&c' desk on the same date: the *RSPB Conservation Review 1997* ('an insight into the broad range of the RSPB's conservation work') and *The Game Conservancy Trust Review of 1997* ('a full report of the activities of The Game Conservancy Trust and Game Conservancy Limited').

They provide some interesting similarities and contrasts, but they are both absolutely fascinating in their contents and an excellent read for anyone interested in birds and the wider environment. Agriculture figures highly in both publications, with the latest news from the GCT 'Allerton Project' and a full review of the indirect effects of agricultural chemicals. The RSPB's international works include reports from throughout Europe, as well as on the current

situation relating to the Seychelles Magpie-robin *Copsychus sechellarum*. Predators and prey, a perennial subject for managers of nature reserves and grouse moors, are dealt with in some detail, including the by now almost familiar Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus* and Red Grouse *Lagopus lagopus* debate. The GCT tackles the fascinating topic of the Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes* and its relationship with wildlife tourism, particularly in Norfolk. Non-avian topics include fungi and butterflies on RSPB reserves, and deer and fisheries management on various estates.

These two impressive publications need closer attention from the birding community. The reports are obtainable from RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL; and Game Conservancy Trust, Fordingbridge, Hampshire SP6 1EF.

Bulgarian news in English

The Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds (BSPB) now produces two English-language versions of its colour magazine *For the Birds*. Previously this was produced, printed and circulated in Bulgaria at high cost to the Society in the present economic situation, with the poor exchange rate that exists between the Bulgarian lev and sterling. Since the formation of the UK branch of

BSPB, however, the English-language version is produced in Bulgaria and sent to the UK, where it is duplicated and circulated to the approximately 100 UK members.

Details of the BSPB (annual subscription £10.00) are available from Ann Scott, Secretary BSPB (UK), 8 Woodlands, St Neots, Cambridgeshire PE19 1UE.

Chan Robbins elected Hon. Subscriber

We are delighted to announce that Dr Chandler S. Robbins has accepted our invitation to become an Honorary Subscriber. He was elected unanimously by the Editorial Board in recognition of his enormous contribution to World ornithology, especially in the field of surveys and censuses, including atlas studies. Most of Chan's work has been in North America, especially his native USA, but his fieldwork has also often taken him to Central and South America, and his influence has been worldwide.

In his letter of acceptance, Dr Robbins wrote: 'I am overwhelmed, and of course very pleased, that the Editorial Board of *British Birds* has voted to elect me as an Honorary Subscriber—the only American among your distinguished dozen. I shall

celebrate this honor at my 80th birthday next week.

'I really miss the stimulating contacts I used to have with British and European ornithologists. I've gotten so involved with research and training in the New World tropics that I now go to Neotropical and Caribbean meetings rather than IOC's or census/atlas meetings in Europe or Africa. So the honor from *British Birds* came as a great surprise. Please convey my thanks to the Board.'

Chan joins Brian & Sheila Bottomley, I. J. Ferguson-Lees, P. A. D. Hollom, Guy Mountfort, E. M. Nicholson, Bill Oddie, M. J. Rogers, Major R. F. Ruttledge, Dr P. O. Swanberg, Prof. Dr K. H. Voous and D. I. M. Wallace, who are the journal's only other Honorary Subscribers.

Where are our young Great Bitterns?

The RSPB has put a lot of effort into researching the ecology of the Great Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*, rehabilitating the habitat at old breeding sites, and creating new sites, but still there were only 13 booming males in Britain this summer. This is two up on last year, but a frighteningly low figure. RSPB researchers are increasingly gathering vital data on habitat requirements by radio-tracking individuals. This year, radio-tags and a BTO ring were fitted to 20 nestling Great Bitterns. Their progress was then followed until most had dispersed from their natal sites. *Now, you can help.*

RSPB researchers need to know as quickly as possible the location of any sightings of Great Bitterns with a BTO ring or a radio-tag. The BTO ring is on the tarsus; the radio-tags are small and are fitted onto the leg by a leather strap above the tarsus, and a thin silver or black wire a few centimetres long may be seen at close quarters when the birds are in flight. Once relocated, these young bitterns will continue to provide us with crucial conservation information.

Please contact or leave a message for Dr Gillian Gilbert: phone 01767 680551; mobile 1411127895; e-mail gillian.gilbert@rspb.org.uk; address RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

Checklist of Irish birds

Now that the British Ornithologists' Union has decided to produce a British List (rather than a British & Irish List), those who want to know the accepted status of bird species in the whole of Ireland will wish to consult the new 40-page *Checklist of the Birds of Ireland*, compiled by the Irish Rare Birds Committee and published by BirdWatch Ireland.

It is available (price £5.00, post free) from BirdWatch Ireland, Ruttledge House, 8 Longford Terrace, Monkstown, Dublin.

Kittiwakes in Suffolk

We have had our wrists slapped—and justifiably! We recently reported (*Brit. Birds* 91: 204) on Kittiwakes *Rissa tridactyla* nesting in Durham on an artificial site provided as a replacement for former nesting ledges on a converted building. Brian Brown from Lowestoft has written to inform us of the 'Lowestoft wall' and its nesting Kittiwakes that he designed some nine years earlier. How we overlooked this very well-known fact we cannot say. We must admit that the Gateshead project may not have been so innovative as we suggested. The most important thing, however, is that the Kittiwakes seem to be doing well at both sites.

'Welsh Birds'

Sponsored by *Chevron Oil UK Ltd*, the new journal *Welsh Birds* started its second volume in June. With refereed main papers, notes on subjects such as 'Ravens [*Corvus corax*] playing in snow' and book reviews, this excellent journal is already performing a vital role in establishing the Welsh Ornithological Society alongside the Scottish Ornithologists' Club. Ex-pat Welshmen in Patagonia and New Zealand, take note. The biannual journal costs £4.50 per issue. The WOS Membership Secretary is Dr D. K. Thomas, Laburnum Cottage, 12 Manselfield Road, Murton, Swansea SA3 3AR.

Raptor and Upland Bird Conference

This year, the annual conference for northern upland-bird enthusiasts is sponsored by Northumbrian Water Ltd and is hosted jointly by the Durham Bird Club and the Durham Upland Bird Study Group. It will be held at Collingwood College, Durham University, on Saturday 21st November, from 9.30 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. For more information, please contact Mrs Anne Raw, 25 Pinewood Crescent, Heighington, Co. Durham DL5 6RR; tel. 01325-314292.

Top wildlife photographs

The 150 winning and commended photographs in this year's Wildlife Photograph of the Year competition, sponsored by BG and organised by *BBC Wildlife* magazine and The Natural History Museum, will be on view at the Museum from 24th October to the end of February 1999. Judging by previous years, it will be well worth a visit if you are in London.

Highs and lows in the garden

The BTO's Garden BirdWatch scheme has revealed all-time high levels for Long-tailed Tits *Aegithalos caudatus*, Goldfinches *Carduelis carduelis* and Siskins *C. spinus* in winter 1997/98, and all-time low levels for Song Thrushes *Turdus philomelos* and House Sparrows *Passer domesticus*.

For more details, or to find out how to contribute, write to BTO Garden BirdWatch, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU, or phone 01842 750050, or fax 01842 750030.

World's oldest Curlew Sandpiper

The aptly named Victorian Wader Study Group has claimed the World's oldest known Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*. It was first caught not in the nineteenth century, but in December 1979, making it over 19 years old when retrapped in Australia earlier this year. Dr Clive Minton comments that, in its life, this bird must have flown well over 400,000 km, equivalent to the distance from the Earth to the Moon.

Andrew Stock at The Mall

Andrew Stock's seventh London exhibition will be held at The Mall Galleries in October-November. He was accepted as a member of the Society of Wildlife Artists in 1983, and was elected as its Hon. Secretary in 1995, the year in which he won the title Bird Illustrator of the Year (*Brit. Birds* 88: 351-356, 634). In December 1997, he was elected as the youngest-ever member of the Board of Governors of the Federation of British Artists. His latest exhibition will be open for ten days from 22nd October. For details, phone/fax 01935 873620.

Bernard Tucker Memorial Lecture

The 47th Bernard Tucker Memorial Lecture, hosted jointly by the Oxford Ornithological Society and the Ashmolean Natural History Society and sponsored by *British Birds*, will be given by Dr Rob Fuller of the BTO, on 'Woodland Birds in Britain and Europe: from primeval forest to coppiced woodland'. The Lecture will take place on Tuesday 3rd November 1998 at the Oxford University Museum of Natural History (formerly the University Museum), South Parks Road, Oxford, at 8.00 pm. Non-members are welcome; admission is £1.00.

New Recorder

Geoff Holmes, 22 Tenbury Drive, Telford Estate, Shrewsbury, Shropshire SY2 5YF, has taken over from Geoff Smith as Recorder for Shropshire.



RECENT BBRC DECISIONS



This monthly listing of the most recent decisions by the British Birds Rarities Committee is not intended to be comprehensive or in any way to replace the annual 'Report on rare birds in Great Britain'. The records listed are mostly those of the rarest species, or those of special interest for other reasons. All records refer to 1997 unless stated otherwise.

ACCEPTED: **Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes* Frampton-on-Severn (Gloucestershire), 26th April to 1st May 1998. **Ivory Gull** *Pagophila eburnea* Aberthaw (Glamorgan), 2nd January 1998. **Pallid Swift** *Apus pallidus* St Agnes (Scilly), 17th May 1998. **Greenish Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochiloides* Near Johnshaven, Aberdeen (Northeast Scotland), 31st August to 2nd September. **Hume's Warbler** *P. humei* Strumble Head (Pembrokeshire), 20th November 1993; Littlestone (Kent), 25th November. **Radde's Warbler** *P. schwarzi* St Mary's (Seilly), 14th October; presumed same, 19th October. **Dusky Warbler** *P. fuscatus* Point of Ayr (Flintshire), 11th to at least 12th November. **Penduline Tit** *Rennia pendulinus* Kenfig (Glamorgan), since 11th November 1996 to at least 9th March, possibly to 16th; Dungeness (Kent), male and one other, 26th-27th October; Treseo (Scilly), 28th October; another male, Dungeness, 6th November to at least 19th February 1998, possibly to 14th March 1998; Lytechett Bay, Poole Harbour (Dorset), 20th January to 13th February 1998. **Two-barred Crossbill** *Loxia leucoptera* Near Parkend (Gloucestershire), from 15th February to 27th March 1998. **Blackpoll Warbler** *Dendroica striata* Treseo, 12th October to 1st November. **Common Yellowthroat** *Geothlypis trichas* St Mary's, 9th October to 2nd November.

M. J. Rogers, Secretary, BBRC, 2 Churchtown Cottages, Torvednack, St Ives, Cornwall TR26 3AZ



RECENT REPORTS

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary covers the period from 17th August to 13th September 1998. These are unchecked reports, not authenticated records.

Black-browed Albatross *Diomedea melanophrys* Cape Clear Island (Co. Cork), 11th September. **Madeira/Cape Verde Petrel** *Pterodroma madeira/feae* Bridges of Ross (Co. Clare), 20th August; Newbiggin (Northumberland), 24th August; Cape Clear Island, 10th September. **Cory's Shearwater** *Calonectris diomedea* Large movements off southwestern coasts including 3,500 off Porthgwarra (Cornwall), 5th September. **Little Shearwater** *Puffinus assimilis* Pendeen (Cornwall), 8th September; Seaforth (Merseyside), 10th September; Port Isaac (Cornwall) and Sheringham (Norfolk), 11th September. **Wilson's Storm-petrel** *Oceanites oceanicus* Pendeen, 24th August; Bardsey (Gwynedd),

10th September; Strumble Head (Dyfed), 11th September. **Least Sandpiper** *Calidris minutilla* St Mary's (Seilly), 8th September; Rogerstown (Co. Dublin), 12th-13th September. **Sabine's Gull** *Larus sabini* 65, mostly juveniles, Kileummin Head (Co. Mayo), 10th September. **Common Nighthawk** *Chordeiles minor* Male, St Agnes (Seilly), 9th-13th September; female, St Agnes, 13th September. **Cliff Swallow** *Hirundo pyrrhonota* Titchfield Haven (Hampshire), 13th September. **Eastern Bonelli's Warbler** *Phylloscopus orientalis* Sumburgh and Grutness (Shetland), 27th August to 7th September. **Nutcracker** *Nucifraga caryocatactes* Kingsdown (Kent), 6th September.



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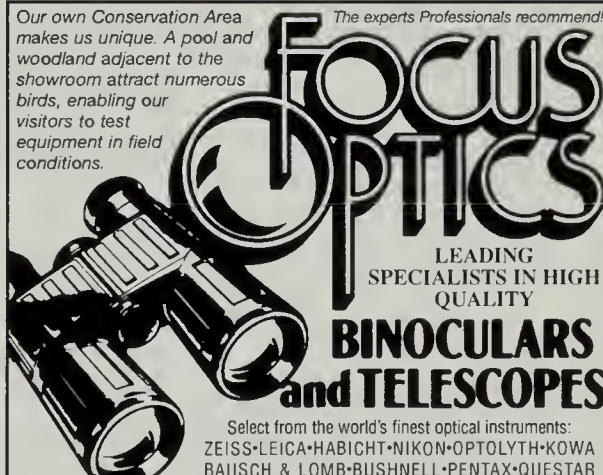
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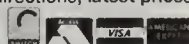
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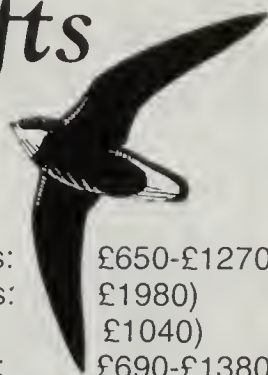
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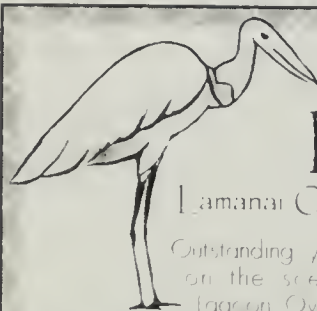
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Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 1997

M. J. Rogers and the Rarities Committee
with comments by Grahame Walbridge and Andy Stoddart

ZEISS

This is the fortieth annual Report of the Rarities Committee and, once again, it demonstrates the vital roles of the Report and the Committee. This is, perhaps, not surprising, as the Committee is the only body that liaises with the full network of County Bird Recorders (to whom we give thanks) and produces the only report for which detailed descriptions are independently assessed by a panel of democratically elected individuals. In an average year, we process about one thousand records, and our estimate for this year is that only 35 reasonable claims have not yet been submitted to the Committee for scrutiny. Two notable records were not submitted in time to be dealt with in this Report: a Great White Egret *Egretta alba* (possibly of the Nearctic race), in Northamptonshire, in November-December, and a Veery *Catharus fuscescens*, in Devon, in May. A further 20 for 1997 and earlier years arrived too late to be considered for this Report. We feel that, whilst it is not ideal, a late-submission or non-submission rate of 5% is to be expected.

The role of the Committee is clear. We are to assess, from information provided to us, the suitability of records of rare birds to be included in the national rare-bird archive. The specifics of this task create one of our major problems. Because we are judging the records for posterity, we have to base our decisions on the information that is provided to us, so that, if the records are reappraised in future, the logic of our decision-making is obvious. Whilst this may appear self-evident, it was not necessarily the case in previous generations. Recent reassessments of older records have sometimes proved impossible, as the documentation lacked sufficient detail on which to make a judgment. Decisions often seemed to have been based on 'observer criteria' only, that is whether the Committee, at the time, felt that the observer 'would know this bird if he or she saw one', and not on the standard of description. This has been one of the major reasons why reviews of old records have taken so long.

Currently, we strive to reach a balance, with knowledge of the observer used alongside the quality of the description. The ever-improving standard of rare-bird photographs has made this much easier, although it has also caused some problems. Today, it is a comparatively rare event to see someone taking field notes at a 'twitch'; why should you, when there are superb photographs for sale or published for all to see in the birding glossies? In addition, if the initial

description from the finder is not sufficiently detailed, we can usually get further descriptions from other observers present at a twitch. Our problem comes more with birds that are seen by a very few or only one observer, and especially when the bird is not a 'mega-rarity'. Because of the twitching network, it is possible for a birder to see three or four individuals of some species—e.g. Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla* or Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti*—in a year. Thus, it is easy to understand why some people feel that they need to supply a less-than-complete description; but, if there are no photographs or supporting descriptions, the Committee often has to judge the record to be unproven.

In this Report, we not only detail those records which we feel are acceptable, but also list, in Appendix 2, those records which we feel do not meet the standards required for acceptance. In the majority of cases, the Committee considers that the identification was probably correct, but that the documentation, usually through no fault of the observers, is not sufficient to prove the record beyond reasonable doubt. Whilst the level of detail required for some species is not great, for others, such as the 'peeps', a full and very detailed description is required. The Committee takes all records seriously; none is discarded out of hand (although flocks of Nutcrackers *Nucifraga caryocatactes* coming to bird-tables in summer are an exception) and some take an enormous amount of work (see *Brit. Birds* 91: 180-184).

In a small number of cases, we feel that a mistake in identification has been made, and, in an even smaller number of instances, we wonder whether we are being deliberately misled. The kudos of finding rare birds is now such that one can understand the desire to 'find' a rarity, and sometimes this may lead to a claim of a bird that really has not been properly identified. This is one of the reasons why we prefer descriptions which include details of circumstances of the observation. On most occasions, we empathise with the observer and understand how some feature has been missed. Sometimes, however, we feel that it is impossible to have got the level of detail submitted from the reported views. We are also very cautious about observers with a high proportion of single-observer records. We are aware that geographical and social circumstances are such that some people are more likely to find rare birds on their own, but this does not account for the startling rates which we see with some observers. Britain is a small country, and there are many birders out there. Rare birds are a long way off course, and many stay a few days after they have been found. Many observers in remote areas or on inaccessible islands find birds that others get to see, and it is rare for a birder to have a single-observer record rate of more than 50% (in fact, most of the Committee have a single-observer rate of between 5% and 20%). It sets alarm bells ringing when an individual's profile is well outside this range, especially if, as is often the case, it is accompanied by a gradually increasing scarcity of the species claimed in single-observer records. There is no bias against such records individually, but we do have a policy of watching any *patterns* closely and reviewing the observers' past records on a regular basis.

Appendix 4 contains a list of submissions which have been pending for further information either from the observers or from outside experts or other

sources. Whilst we understand the desire for a speedy decision to be reached, we can work only with the material at hand. A less-than-complete description of a good bird might result in its not being accepted. If the record is pended and further information is forthcoming, the correct decision can be made. Under these circumstances, it is in the interest of the observers, as well as being vital to the integrity of the scientific archive, that the record is delayed.

We continue to work in close co-operation with the BOU Records Committee, which is currently examining records of Canvasback *Aythya valisineria*, in Kent in 1996 and in Norfolk in 1997; Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus*, in West Sussex in 1997; and Iberian Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus brehmii*, in Greater London in 1972 and in Scilly in 1992. All have been accepted by the BBRC. We are indebted to the many photographers who have sent us a total of over 500 prints and transparencies for circulation during record assessment (see The Carl Zeiss Award, *Brit. Birds* 91: 406-408), particularly Dr Iain H. Leach, George Reszeter and Steve Young, who supplied large numbers of high-quality prints, and all those whose work especially helped the Committee in its deliberations (e.g. Gary Bellingham, whose photograph of the Cumbrian Purple Gallinule *Porphyrio porphyrio* showed, despite assertions to the contrary by some observers, that this bird had missing primaries on at least one wing).

Whilst the BOU Records Committee has, at the request of the Irish Rare Birds Committee, ceased to maintain a British & Irish List, now publishing only a British List, we have agreed, following representation from the Northern Ireland Bird Records Committee, to continue to provide statistics for Britain and Ireland combined. This makes zoogeographical sense, whereas listing of data separately for the United Kingdom and for the Republic of Ireland would not. This arrangement will, of course, be reviewed periodically, but, for the time being, the method of calculating the annual statistics is the same as that used for the past 40 years (see pages 458-459).

The Committee continues to examine ways of streamlining its system, and is currently in the throes of a modernisation process that, amongst other things, will allow the speeding-up of circulations of difficult records. We have developed a network of international experts who have agreed to act as advisors to the Committee. All are able to receive information through the Internet, including scanned photographs and drawings. We wish to thank those who have agreed to help us in this way, including Per Alström, Arnoud B. van den Berg, Louis Bevier, Ned Brinkley, Geoff Carey, Alan Dean, Jon Dunn, Jim Enticott, Dick Forsman, Kimball Garrett, Erik Hirschfeld, Hannu Jännes, Al Jaramillo, Paul Lehman, Bruce Mactavish, Michael O'Brien, Dennis Paulsen, Ron Pittaway and Will Russell. We should also like to thank Ned Brinkley, Pete Clement, Dick Forsman, Erik Hirschfeld, Paul Holt, Gabor Magyar, Anthony McGeehan, Bruce Mactavish, Klaus Malling Olsen and Keith Vinicombe for their input on difficult records this year, and Keith Naylor for his extensive practical assistance in respect of historical data.

We continue to be enormously grateful to Carl Zeiss Ltd for sponsorship of the Committee's work, which has supported us for the past 16 years.

COLIN BRADSHAW

Highlights

Formerly regarded as a race of Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus humei*, Hume's Warbler *P. humei* is the latest 'split' announced by the BOU Records Committee, and the first 27 records are listed in this Report, a mere 19½ years after reports were first requested by the BBRC (*Brit. Birds* 72: 126).

In 1997, the most unexpected event was an influx involving the amazing total of 16 Desert Wheatears *Oenanthe deserti* between mid October and early December. Other especially notable rarities listed in this Report include:

- 1st Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* of race *delicata* (Ireland, 1991)
- 1st Cedar Waxwing *Bombycilla cedrorum* (1985)
- 1st Eastern Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus orientalis* (1987)
- 2nd Redhead *Aythya americana*
- 2nd Semipalmated Plover *Charadrius semipalmatus*
- 2nd Rufous Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos* of race *africana/hafizi* (1991)
- 2nd Siberian Rubythroat *L. calliope*
- 2nd Spectacled Warbler *Sylvia conspicillata*
- 3rd Long-toed Stint *Calidris subminuta* (Ireland, 1996)
- 6th & 7th Calandra Larks *Melanocorypha calandra*
- 6th & 7th Common Yellowthroats *Geothlypis trichas*
- 7th Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis* (Ireland, 1996)
- 8th Western Sandpiper *C. mauri*
- 8th Blue-cheeked Bee-eater *Merops superciliosus*

JTRS

Systematic list of accepted records

The principles and procedures followed in considering records were explained in the 1958 Report (*Brit. Birds* 53: 155-158). The systematic list is set out in the same way as in the 1996 Report (90: 453-522). The following points show the basis on which the list has been compiled:

1. The details included for each record are (1) county; (2) locality; (3) number of birds if more than one, and age and sex if known (in the case of spring and summer records, however, the age is normally given only where the bird concerned was not in adult plumage); (4) if photographed, tape-recorded or video-recorded (and this evidence seen or heard by the Committee); (5) if trapped or found dead and where specimen is stored, if known; (6) date(s); and (7) observer(s), normally up to three in number, in alphabetical order.
2. In general, this Report is confined to records which are regarded as certain, and 'probables' are not included. In the case of the very similar American *Phuvalis dominica* and Pacific Golden Plovers *P. fulva*, Long-billed *Limnodromus scolopaceus* and Short-billed Dowitchers *L. griseus* and Eastern *Phylloscopus orientalis* and Western Bonelli's Warblers *P. bonelli*, however, we publish indeterminate records, and this also applies to those of pratincoles *Glareola*, albatrosses *Diomedea* and frigatebirds *Fregata*.
3. The sequence of species, English names and scientific nomenclature follow *The 'British Birds' List of Birds of the Western Palearctic* (1997).
4. The three numbers in parentheses after each species' name refer respectively to the total number of individuals recorded in Britain & Ireland (excluding those 'At sea') (i) to the end of 1957, (ii) for the period since the formation of the Rarities Committee in 1958, but excluding (iii) those listed here for the current year. The decision as to how many individuals were involved is often difficult and rather arbitrary, but the consensus of members is indicated by 'possibly the same' (counted as

different in the totals), 'probably the same' (counted as the same in the totals), or 'the same' when the evidence is certain or overwhelming. An identical approach is applied to records of a particular species recurring at the same locality after a lapse of time, including those which occur annually at the same or a nearby site. In considering claims of more than one individual at the same or adjacent localities, the Committee usually requires firm evidence before more

than one is counted in the totals. A detailed breakdown of the figures for previous years is held by the Honorary Secretary.

5. Irish records, assessed and accepted by the Irish Rare Birds Committee, are included separately, following the subheading IRELAND.
6. The breeding and wintering ranges are given in parentheses at the beginning of each species comment.

White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii* (18, 170, 4)

Dorset Portland Bill, age uncertain, 13th March (M. Cade).

Orkney North Ronaldsay, second-summer, 7th June (P. J. Donnelly).

Shetland Fetlar, second-summer or third-summer, 24th-29th April (S. Hinde, D. Suddaby, T. Thomason *et al.*).

Sussex, East Newhaven, adult, 27th April (E. Urquhart).

1996 Shetland Mousa Sound, adult, 5th-6th May (*Brit. Birds* 90: 457), observers included S. Croft.

(Arctic Russia eastwards to Arctic Canada) A rather poor year by recent standards, but two more records in the English Channel, including the first for Dorset.

Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps* (0, 20, 4)

Cornwall Hayle, since 31st December 1996 (*Brit. Birds* 90: 457) to 15th April.

Greater London South Norwood Lake, 26th January to 30th March, photo. (J. Flynn *et al.*) (plate 116); presumed same, Tooting Bec Common, 5th December to 10th February 1998, photo. (G. Messenbird *et al.*).

Lancashire Dock Acres Gravel-pits, 24th May to 8th June, photo. (J. A. Girdley *et al.*). Also in West Yorkshire.

Northamptonshire Ravensthorpe Reservoir, 26th April (G. Pullan *et al.*).

Wiltshire Cotswold Water Park, 1st-15th August (G. M. Buchanan *et al.*).

Yorkshire, West Skelton Lake, 14th June to 17th July, photo. (P. R. Morris *et al.*); same, Mickletown Ings, 18th-19th July (per W. J. Hesketh). Presumed same as Lancashire.

(North and South America) A record year, though it is just feasible that the Greater London bird merely did a tour around Britain.

Black-browed Albatross *Diomedea melanophris* (2, 25, 0)

IRELAND

1967 & 1968 Cork Following a review of all Irish records by the Irish Rare Birds Committee, records on 1st June 1967, 1st October 1967 and 13th August 1968 are no longer accepted (*Irish Birds* 6: 64). See also 1967 Cork under 'Albatross', below.

1995 Cork 3 km southwest of Cape Clear Island, adult or subadult, 9th September (*Irish Birds* 6: 64).

1996 Cork Cape Clear Island, adult, 22nd August (*Irish Birds* 6: 64).

(Southern oceans) There has been none in Britain since 1995, when the adult at Hermaness, Unst, Shetland, put in its final(?) appearance, having returned to summer at the Saito outcrop in all but three years since 1972.

Albatross *Diomedea* (2, 37, 0)

IRELAND

1988 Cork 8 km southeast of Cape Clear Island, 8th July (*Irish Birds* 6: 64).

1968 & 1973 Cork Following a review of all Irish records by the IRBC, records on 13th July 1968, two on 26th August 1968, 3rd September 1968 and 17th May 1973 are no longer accepted (*Irish Birds* 6: 64).

1967 Cork Cape Clear Island, adult, 2nd September, previously accepted as Black-browed *D. melanophris*, now accepted as unidentified albatross (*Irish Birds* 6: 64).

(Southern oceans) The totals include those specifically identified.

Madeira/Cape Verde Petrel *Pterodroma madeira/feae* (0, 22, 1)

Norfolk Blakeney Point, 26th June (S. J. McElwee); same, Cley (S. J. M. Gantlett); same, Sheringham (I. K. & Mrs K. Johnson); same, Mundesley (M. Fiszer).

1996 Cornwall Gwennap Head, 11th June (J. Hawkey).

1996 Scilly About 3.2 km southwest of Bishop Rock, 18th August (W. H. Wagstaff).

IRELAND

1974 Cork Cape Clear Island, 5th September (*Irish Birds* 6: 65), previously accepted only as an unidentified *Pterodroma* petrel (*Brit. Birds* 70: 445).

1989 Cork Old Head of Kinsale, 14th August (*Irish Birds* 6: 65), previously accepted only as an unidentified *Pterodroma* petrel (*Brit. Birds* 86: 453).

1994 Cork Mizen Head, one or possibly two, 24th August (*Irish Birds* 6: 65), not 'two' as previously stated (*Brit. Birds* 88: 497).

1995 Kerry Kerry Head, 26th August, probably same as Brandon Point nine hours later on same date (*Brit. Birds* 90: 458; *Irish Birds* 6: 65).

1996 Cork Cape Clear Island, 22nd August (*Irish Birds* 6: 64).

1996 Down St John's Point, 22nd August (*Northern Ireland Bird Rep.* 1996: 21; *Irish Birds* 6: 64).

(Central Atlantic) Soft-plumaged Petrel *P. mollis* is now excluded by this Committee from the formula employed by the BOURC, no British or Irish record having involved a bird showing a combination of a complete (or near-complete) breastband and a short rounded tail, concolorous with the uppertail-coverts and back. In so far as exclusion of *P. madeira* is concerned, the Committee follows the view that its identification in the field as clearly separable from *P. feae* still remains to be rigorously tested. The 1974 Irish record becomes the first, predating the one at Porthgwarra, Cornwall, during 12th to 14th August 1990 (*Brit. Birds* 85: 510; 87: 509).

Little Shearwater *Puffinus assimilis* (5, 93, 1)

Pembrokeshire Strumble Head, 12th September (G. H. Rees *et al.*).

IRELAND

1996 Clare Bridges of Ross, 16th August (*Irish Birds* 6: 66).

(Atlantic south from Madeira and Caribbean, southern Pacific and Indian Oceans) After two blank years in Britain, a typical record in what is the peak month, accounting for 27% of the total. This species continues to have the dubious distinction of having just about the highest rejection rate, but the Committee does not entirely subscribe to the view that the species is as rare in British & Irish waters as has been suggested in some circles; it is, however, an apparent anomaly that seven records of eight corpses fall in the period 7th March to 29th June.

Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus* (4, 23, 1)

Pembrokeshire Strumble Head, 5th September (C. Benson, R. H. Davies, G. H. Rees).

At sea Sea area Sole, 49°07'N 07°04'W, about 64 km southwest of Bishop Rock, Scilly, two, 10th August (M. S. Wallen *et al.*); about 11.3 km southwest of St Agnes, Scilly, 24th August (P. K. Greaves *et al.*).

IRELAND

1995 Cork Cape Clear Island, 27th July; two, 19th August (*Irish Birds* 6: 66).

1996 Cork Cape Clear Island, 17th August; presumed different, 18th August (*Irish Birds* 6: 66).

(Southern oceans) Mainland sightings are still very rare: the Pembrokeshire record is the third from that headland, but, in Britain, St Ives, Cornwall, leads the way with seven. Reports of up to four on the *Scillonian* pelagic trip were not substantiated by the details received by the Committee.

Frigatebird *Fregata* (0, 5, 0)

IRELAND

1995 Dublin Booterstown, female or immature, 22nd June (*Irish Birds* 6: 66).

(Tropical oceans) Presumably the same individual as that seen earlier in the month in Cornwall and then in Dyfed (*Brit. Birds* 89: 487).

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* (150, 191, 6)

Hertfordshire Rye Meads, ♂, 17th-18th May, trapped 17th (A. J. Harris *et al.*).

Lancashire Marton Mere, ♂, 12th-23rd June (M. Jones *et al.*).

Norfolk Holme, ♂, 13th-16th June, probably since 11th (G. F. Hibberd, M. J. & Mrs D. E. Saunt, J. R. Williamson *et al.*).

Scilly St Mary's, ♀, 3rd-5th May, photo. (M. S. Scott *et al.*).

Shetland Lera Voe and Footabrough area, ♀, 12th-30th June, photo. (O. Cheyne, P. Sclater *et al.*).

Somerset Highbridge, ♂, 6th-10th April, photo. (R. J. Ingram, B. E. Slade *et al.*) (fig. 1).

1958 Somerset Locality withheld, ♂, intermittently, 21st June to 1st August; ♀, 18th, 27th July, 12th August (*Brit. Birds* 53: 160; 74: 396), locality was Huntworth.

1960 Cambridgeshire Locality withheld, ♂, ♀, intermittently, 21st June to 19th July (*Brit. Birds* 54: 180), locality was Stibbington Gravel-pits, Huntingdonshire.

1993 Dorset Radipole, ♂, 7th May (T. Baker).

(West Eurasia, Africa and Australia; winters Africa and Southern Asia) A fairly typical year in terms of dates and numbers, though the Shetland record is noteworthy, being only the fifth for that archipelago: the last was way back in June 1965.

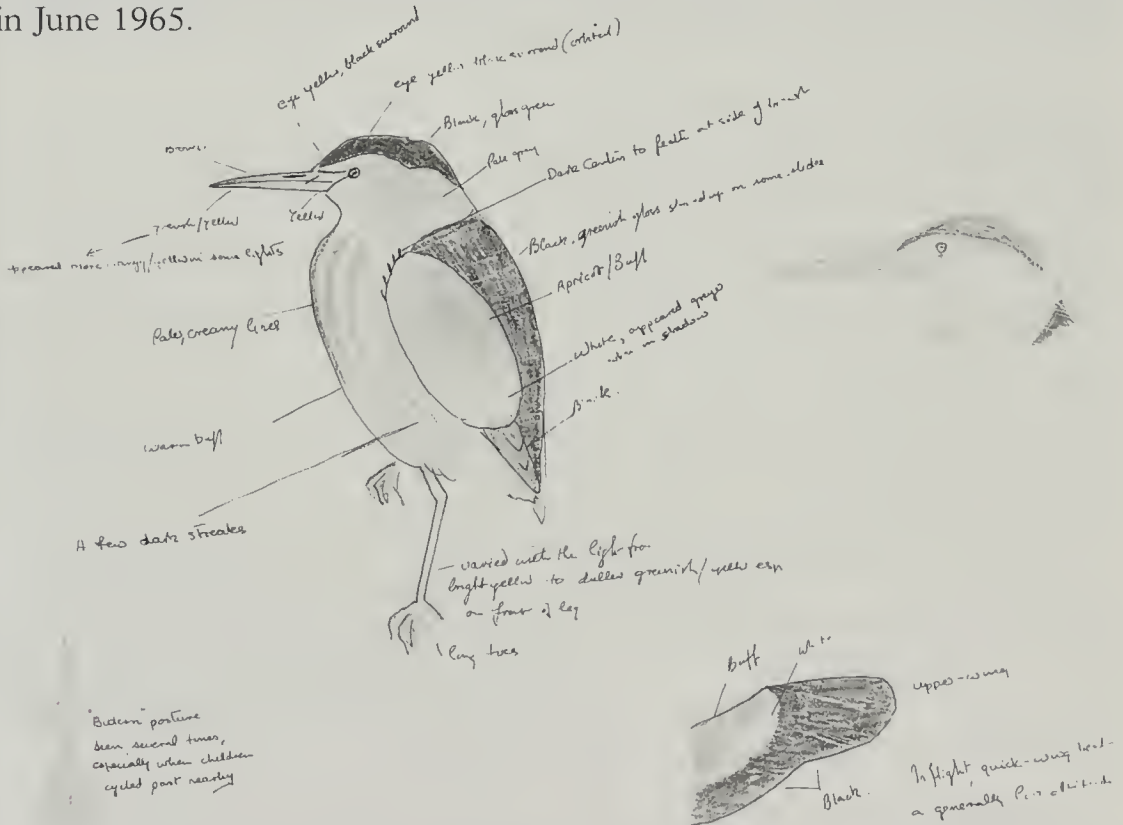


Fig. 1. Male Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*, Somerset, April 1997 (Brian E. Slade)

Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* (165, 377, 17)**Cornwall** Skewjack, adult, 23rd April (K. A. Wilson).**Gwent** Llandegfedd Reservoir, juvenile, 7th-30th July (J. R. Bennett, C. Jones, M. Plunket *et al.*).**Norfolk** Little Dunham, juvenile, 26th-28th January (K. Bishop *et al.*). Holkham, up to five, 7th May to 28th August: two adults, 1st-29th June; two second-summers, 7th May to 28th August; subadult, 15th May to end of June (V. Eve, M. Tunmore *et al.*). Honing, juvenile, 2nd September (C. Lansdell).**Northumberland** Holywell Dene, two adults, one second-summer, 11th-21st May (M. D. Plenty *et al.*).**Scilly** St Mary's, adult, 11th June (M. S. Scott, N. Wheatley).**Somerset** Shapwick Heath, adult, 13th May (Dr P. J. Knight *et al.*); two adults, 14th-15th June, one to at least 22nd (J. A. & Mrs K. L. Hazell *et al.*). Westhay Moor, two, age uncertain, 14th August (B. D. Gibbs, R. Musgrove); two, possibly three, 22nd, 28th (J. A. Hazell per B. D. Gibbs); presumed same as Shapwick Heath.**Wiltshire** Cotswold Water Park, adult, 7th August (P. Adams).**1991 Devon** Brixham, adult, February, date uncertain, photo. (J. Hingley).**1996 Clyde** Strathaven, juvenile, 21st-24th July (A. I. English *et al.*).

(South Eurasia, Africa and the Americas; European population winters Africa) Multiple occurrences are not, in themselves, unprecedented. In the last century, eight adults were collected from the River Erme at Flete, Devon, in May/June 1849 (*Zoologist* (1849): 2528) and, much more recently, up to nine were in Scilly in the spring of 1990. The summering birds in Norfolk and Somerset, mirroring the two adults in Kent last year, have, however, raised hopes that this species may be a future colonist. With regard to the free-flying collections (*Brit. Birds* 89: 487-488), the present situation in Norfolk is that: at Earsham, the colony no longer exists; but, at Great Witchingham, in addition to up to 30 individuals held in captivity in the park, there are thought to be up to 30 free-flying unmarked birds.

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* (95, 43, 5)**Cambridgeshire** Ouse Washes area, first-summer, 7th to at least 9th July, photo.; same, Ely, 26th July to 2nd August (A. S. Cook *et al.*).**Devon** Seaton, 15th May (P. Abbott, R. Anning, T. Wiley *et al.*).**Gloucestershire/Wiltshire** Cotswold Water Park, 24th June to 1st July, photo. (G. A. J. Deacon, K. J. Grearson *et al.*) (plate 121). Also in Somerset.**Somerset** Rode, first-summer, 13th June (B. J. Widden *et al.*). Presumed same as Gloucestershire/Wiltshire.**Surrey** Walton Reservoir, 17th June (D. M. Harris *et al.*).**Sussex, East** Bodle Street, 18th-20th June (A. & Mrs J. Ainslie, A. Aldridge, W. R. Potter).**Wiltshire** See Gloucestershire/Wiltshire above.

IRELAND

1996 Cork Ballycotton, 13th-17th June (*Irish Birds* 6: 66).

(Southern Europe, Southwest Asia and Africa; winters Africa) A good year, the arrival dates falling neatly into the already established peak period. This species has been recorded in seven of the past ten years, accounting for over half of the post-1958 total. This is perhaps surprising when the species has declined over much of its range in Europe, but it is most likely attributable to overshoots from an increasing Spanish population.

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* (2, 86, 1)**Cheshire** West Kirby, 30th April (C. I. Butterworth).**1987 Shropshire** Near Westbury, adult, dead, January, date uncertain, mounted specimen

held by R. Dodwell, photo. (J. Beecroft). Presumed same as Doxey Marshes, Stafford, 7th January, previously in Derbyshire (*Brit. Birds* 81: 542).

1992 Yorkshire, East Hornsea Mere, 14th May, photo. (T. D. Charlton, D. R. Middleton *et al.*).

1996 Pembrokeshire Skomer, 30th April (W. Parker, P. Pugh *et al.*).

1996 Yorkshire, South Thorne area, 12th October to 29th November, 22nd December (*Brit. Birds* 90: 459), dates were 11th October to 29th December, found/identified by B. P. Wainwright.

IRELAND

1996 Wexford Ring Marsh, 31st March (*Irish Birds* 6: 66).

(Almost cosmopolitan in tropics; nearest breeding in north of France) A poor year by recent standards, though there was a blank in 1991. The additional 1992 record completes the picture for the influx of at least 19 in that year.

Great White Egret *Egretta alba* (10, 79, 8)

Cambridgeshire Fen Drayton Gravel-pits, 4th-5th December; same, Marsh Lane Gravel-pits, 6th-8th (J. Oates *et al.*).

Devon Axmouth Marsh, 21st July (A. J. Bundy *et al.*). Dawlish Warren and Countess Wear, 18th and 22nd October (I. W. Lakin, A. Rosier, K. Rylands *et al.*).

Glamorgan Kenfig, 22nd July (N. P. Roberts).

Greater London Brent Reservoir, 13th May (J.-P. Charteris, A. M. Self, M. Wurr).

Hampshire Lymington, 19th August (G. Giddens).

Surrey Cranleigh, 22nd-23rd December (R. Stride *et al.*).

1996 Kent Bough Beech Reservoir, 5th-14th January (C. Bond *et al.*); same as East Sussex, West Sussex, Hampshire (*Brit. Birds* 90: 460).

IRELAND

Antrim Black Glen, 8th October to 29th November.

(Almost cosmopolitan, extremely local in Europe) The first for Northern Ireland. Details of a much-publicised bird in Northamptonshire have not yet been submitted, as is also the case with the well-watched individual in Norfolk. In the Channel Islands, one was at St Saviour's, Guernsey, on 23rd October 1996.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* (many, 70, 2)

Lancashire Pilling Lane Ends, two, 20th-29th April (R. E. Danson, S. J. Dodgson, M. Jones *et al.*).

1996 Pembrokeshire Skokholm, 19th June (G. V. F. Thompson, J. & Mrs G. Threadgold); presumed same as Marloes, 16th (*Brit. Birds* 90: 460).

1996 Somerset Ston Easton, first-winter, 28th November, photo. (D. Clothier, Mrs B. Watts per K. E. Vinicombe).

IRELAND

1996 Cork Clogheen Marsh, Inchydoney, immature, 20th-21st June (*Irish Birds* 6: 67).

1996 Wexford North Slob, from 1995 (*Brit. Birds* 90: 460) to 15th May, and Tacumshin, immature, 6th July to 21st August, presumed same as North Slob individual (*Irish Birds* 6: 67).

(Almost cosmopolitan, nearest breeding colonies in Balkans and irregularly Camargue, France) A Yorkshire record remains to be dealt with. Although the Puna Ibis *P. ridgwayi* is known to be still at Whitwell, Hertfordshire, where it has been in residence since May 1980, there has been no recent evidence that it has been given to travelling far afield.

Lesser White-fronted Goose *Anser erythropus* (47, 87, 1)

Norfolk Holkham, adult, 12th-22nd January, photo. (A. I. Bloomfield, P. Tuck *et al.*).

(Northeast Europe and Siberia; winters Southeast Europe and Southwest Asia) With the now regular wintering of small numbers in the Netherlands, it

is perhaps surprising that this species has not become more frequent on the East Coast.

Brent Goose *Branta bernicla*

B. b. nigricans (1, 75, 13)

Anglesey Penrhos, 23rd-30th March, photo. (M. Robinson *et al.*).

Dorset Ferrybridge, 14th-17th January (G. Walbridge *et al.*).

Essex North Woodham Ferrers, 8th December 1996 to 1997 (*Brit. Birds* 90: 461), presumed same, South Woodham Ferrers to 7th March (A. W. Shearring *et al.*). Maldon, 5th January (S. D. Wood). Holland Haven, 18th January (P. Davis, M. L. Hawkes, S. J. Patient). Cudmore Grove, two, 26th-28th January, one since 25th, one photo. (S. J. Dodgson *et al.*). Holliwell Point, at least 1st February (C. McClure *et al.*).

Kent Otterham Creek and Horsham Marsh, 18th January to 2nd February (C. G. Bradshaw, J. A. Rowlands, Mrs A. Shepherd *et al.*); presumed same, Egypt Bay/St Mary's Bay, 16th, 23rd February (M. J. Orchard). Motney Hill, two, 7th April (A. Parker); one, 2nd-30th November (C. G. Bradshaw).

Lancashire Pilling Lane Ends, since 17th December 1996 (*Brit. Birds* 90: 461), to 24th February (per M. Jones).

Norfolk Cley, 17th to at least 18th January (J. Jury, F. J. Watson *et al.*), presumed same as Salthouse and area, 23rd November 1996 (*Brit. Birds* 90: 461). Lynn Point, 5th February (A. Collins). Titchwell, Thornham and Holme area, 5th December to 1998 (P. Bradley, G. E. Dunmore *et al.*).

Suffolk Falkenham, 23rd January (D. Low); presumed same, 1st-25th February (M. C. Marsh *et al.*); presumed returning individual last recorded 25th February 1996 (*Brit. Birds* 90: 461). Cowton, 26th December to 6th January 1998 (J. H. Grant *et al.*).

1995 Kent Coombe and St Mary's Bays, 3rd, 26th December (J. Martin, D. Mercer, M. J. Orchard), presumed same as Gillingham, November-December 1994 (*Brit. Birds* 90: 461).

1996 Hampshire Needs Ore Point, 11th-29th May (A. Rhodes, D. J. Unsworth *et al.*).

IRELAND

1996 Londonderry Lough Foyle, adult, 7th October to 15th November (*Northern Ireland Bird Rep.* 1996: 29).

(Arctic North America and East Siberia; winters USA and East Asia) A record year. Some authorities, notably the Dutch rarities committee (CDNA), treat this form and the pale-bellied Brent Goose *B. b. hrota* as specifically distinct from the nominate dark-bellied Brent Goose (*Dutch Birding* 19: 21-28).

Red-breasted Goose *Branta ruficollis* (15, 33, 1)

Essex See 1996 Essex below.

Hampshire Keyhaven Marsh, first-winter, 17th February (D. & G. Walbridge), present 15th January to at least 30th March; also in Isle of Wight.

Wight, Isle of Compton, first-winter, 1st to at least 6th January (J. C. Gloyn *et al.*); also in Hampshire.

1996 Essex Old Hall Marshes, adult, 14th January (M. L. Hawkes); present, 3rd-4th; presumed same, Mersea Island, 21st December to 16th February 1997, photo. (M. L. Hawkes *et al.*). Presumed same as Holland Haven, 21st February 1996 (*Brit. Birds* 90: 461), and as returning Essex/Kent individual, 1993-94.

(West Siberia; winters Southeast Europe) The credentials of these birds are good, but escapees continue to pose the Committee problems. In Hampshire, a colour-ringed adult was picked up dead at Needs Ore Point on 17th February, and another adult, bearing a black colour ring, was at Warsash during 15th February to 8th April at least, in association with Brent Geese *B. bernicla*, though known escapees usually keep less convincing company.

American Wigeon *Anas americana* (22, 311, 18)

Anglesey/Caernarfonshire Conwy Estuary and Llanfairfechan area, ♂, since 7th October

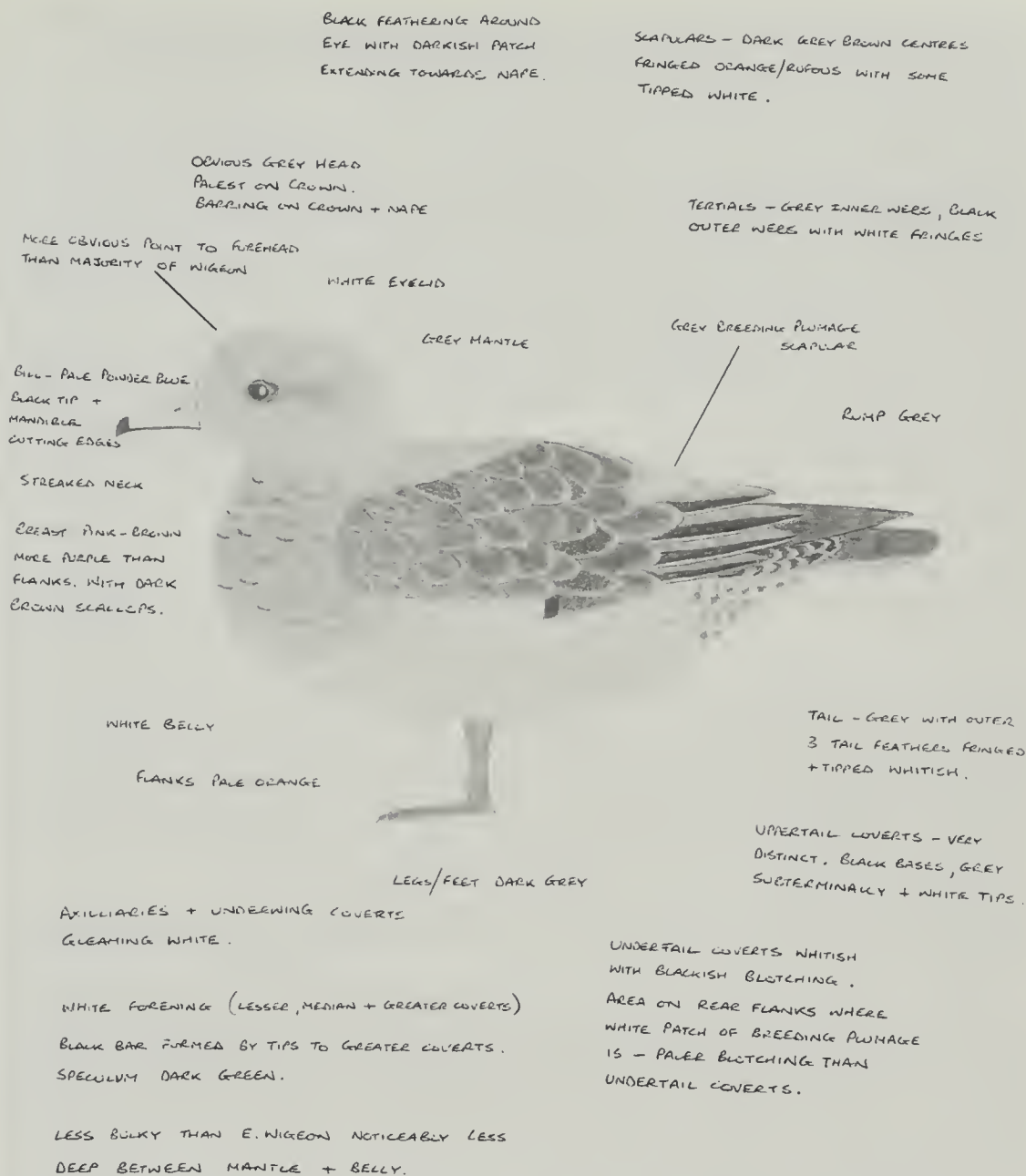


Fig. 2. First-winter male American Wigeon *Anas americana*, Hayle, Cornwall, October 1997 (Steve Dodgson)

1996 (*Brit. Birds* 90: 461), to 21st February, photo.; presumed same, 13th December to 1998.

Cambridgeshire Fen Drayton, ♂, since 30th December 1996 to 5th January (*Brit. Birds* 90: 461). Ouse Washes, ♂, 24th February, 11th March (M. A. Ward *et al.*).

Cheshire Frodsham, first-winter ♂, 13th October (W. S. Morton).

Cleveland Seal Sands and Greenabella Marsh, ♂, 4th-9th October (G. Joynt *et al.*).

Cornwall Stithians Reservoir, ♂, since 23rd November 1996 (*Brit. Birds* 90: 462), to 21st February. Hayle, first-winter ♂, 3rd October to 1998, photo. (S. J. Dodgson *et al.*) (fig. 2).

Cumbria Hodbarrow, ♂, 20th May (C. Raven, S. C. Peters). Ravenglass area, ♂, 9th-16th November (S. J. Dodgson).

Devon Ilsley Marsh, Taw Estuary, ♂, since 10th October 1996 (*Brit. Birds* 90: 462), to 9th February, photo.

Dorset The Fleet and area, ♂, 28th October to 1998 (N. Fowler *et al.*).

Durham Witton le Wear, ♂, 9th February to 25th March (M. Irvin *et al.*).

Fife Craigluscar Reservoirs, ♂, 9th March (J. S. Nadin *et al.*).

Kent Cliffe, first-winter ♂, 28th September to 14th October (P. Larkin, M. J. Orchard, R. C. Peters).

Lancashire Heysham, ♂, intermittently, 12th January to 14th February, photo. (P. J. Marsh *et al.*).

Lincolnshire Read's Island, ♂, 5th October (G. P. Catley).

Norfolk Welney, ♂, 24th January (J. B. Kemp).

Outer Hebrides Loch Leodasay, North Uist, and area, ♂, since 10th November 1996 (*Brit. Birds* 90: 462), to 15th March.

Oxfordshire Stanton Harcourt, ♂, 7th July to at least 28th August, photo. (J. Baker *et al.*).

Pembrokeshire See 1996 Pembrokeshire below.

Shetland Loch of Spiggie, first-summer ♂, 24th May; same, Loch of Hillwell, 25th-28th (R. Baatsen, R. M. Fray, M. Lawson *et al.*).

Somerset Catcott Lows, ♂, 20th March (P. Amies, G. Evans, G. Suter).

Staffordshire Blithfield Reservoir, ♂, 9th-23rd February (P. D. Hyde, W. J. Low *et al.*).

Sussex, West Pagham Harbour, first-winter ♂, since 13th October 1996 (*Brit. Birds* 90: 462), to 15th February.

Yorkshire, North Knaresborough, ♂, 16th-22nd March (R. Evison, I. Webster *et al.*).

1995 Gwent Dingeston, ♀, 26th August to 10th September (S. D. S. Bosanquet, A. E. D. Hickman).

1996 Hampshire Lower Test Marshes, ♂, since 22nd October 1995 (*Brit. Birds* 89: 491) to 25th March.

1996 Pembrokeshire Lawrenny, ♂, 27th December to 3rd January 1997 (C. & R. Stonier *et al.*).

IRELAND

1994 Cork Carrigadrohid, ♂, 20th-21st November, presumed to be one of two ♂♂ near Macroom on 5th March 1995 (*Brit. Birds* 90: 462; *Irish Birds* 6: 68).

1996 Cork Lee Reservoir, ♂, 21st January, presumed returning individual. Reendonegan Lake, ♂, ♀, 21st January, one presumed returning individual. Rostellan, two adult ♂♂, one first-year ♂, 17th November to 24th December, one adult ♂ presumed returning individual. (*Irish Birds* 6: 68)

1996 Donegal Blanket Nook, ♂, 2nd February (*Irish Birds* 6: 68).

1996 Tipperary Ashton's Callow, ♂, 8th November (*Irish Birds* 6: 68).

1996 Wexford North Slob, ♂ in eclipse, 13th October; first-winter, 3rd November to 29th December (*Irish Birds* 6: 68).

(North America; winters USA and Central America) Another good showing. The Caernarfonshire individual was present for its third winter. The last summering bird was a male in Angus & Dundee in 1984 (*Brit. Birds* 83: 448), so the Oxfordshire record is noteworthy, though cynics may well question the origins of such birds.

Common Teal *Anas crecca*

A. c. carolinensis (13, 428, -)

IRELAND

1981 Dublin North Bull Island, ♂, 29th November, presumed returning individual (*Irish Birds* 6: 68).

(North America) This race was no longer considered by the Committee after 1990, but, for the sake of completeness, Irish as well as British records for the earlier period are updated. The Dutch rarities committee (CDNA) treats this form as specifically distinct from Common Teal on the basis of differences in morphology (*Dutch Birding* 20: 22-32).

Black Duck *Anas rubripes* (1, 20, 0)

Scilly Tresco, ♂, since 1996 (*Brit. Birds* 90: 462) to 1st November.

1986 Yorkshire, East Broomfleet Ponds, ♂, 1st September (*Brit. Birds* 80: 527), now considered inadequately documented.

IRELAND

1996 Kerry Barrow Harbour, ♂, 19th September into February 1997 (*Irish Birds* 6: 68).

(North America) Rather disappointingly, details of a 'well-twitted' female present at Alturlie Point, Highland, from 13th January to 1st April 1997 have yet to be submitted.

Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors* (19, 200, 7)

Derbyshire Monsal Dale area, ♂, 1st March to 20th April, photo. (B. Crossthwaite, M. Lacey *et al.*) (plate 113); probably same as Middleton Moor, 24th-27th August, 10th-11th November 1996 (*Brit. Birds* 90: 463).

Devon Kingsteignton and Bowling Green Marsh, ♀, 27th March to 19th April (M. Knott, K. Rylands *et al.*). Paignton, ♂, 25th-26th December (C. Bath).

Flintshire Point of Ayr, ♂, 2nd-12th October (R. Penson *et al.*).

Lincolnshire North Somercoates, first-winter, 28th September (G. P. Catley).

Norfolk Stiffkey Fen, ♂, 22nd-23rd December (V. J. Hanlon *et al.*).

Northumberland Holywell Pond, ♀, 5th January (C. Annan, T. R. Cleaves, M. Hepple *et al.*).

Suffolk Pipp's Ford Gravel-pits, Needham Market, ♀, 23rd September to 19th February 1998 (P. Whittaker *et al.*).

IRELAND

1977 Dublin North Bull, ♂, from 16th September to 14th March 1978 (*Brit. Birds* 71: 493) remained only to 5th March 1978 (*Irish Birds* 6: 69).

1978 Dublin See 1977 Dublin.

1995 Wexford Tacumshin, ♂, 8th April (*Irish Birds* 6: 69).

1996 Cork/Limerick Charleville Lagoons, ♂, from 27th December 1995 to 2nd January, not 1st January (*Brit. Birds* 90: 464; *Irish Birds* 6: 69).

(North America; winters south to Brazil) A typical series of records. While the majority of records undoubtedly refer to genuine vagrants, the provenance of a few is increasingly being questioned in some quarters, examples being the long-staying drake in Derbyshire and the Suffolk individual.

Redhead *Aythya americana* (0, 1, 1)

Leicestershire Rutland Water, ♂, 4th-24th February (R. Mills, J. Wright *et al.*) (fig. 3, on page 469).

(Central and western North America) Only the second record, 'hot on the heels' of the first, a male at Bleasby, Nottinghamshire, during 8th-27th March 1996 (*Brit. Birds* 91: 149-154). Since Bleasby lies only about 50 km NNW of Rutland Water, and the timing of the two records is very similar, there is a widely held view that only one individual was involved. The Committee's view, at this stage, however, is that the evidence is circumstantial; but, if 'the bird' puts in a further appearance, that view is likely to change.

Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris* (1, 378, -)

1979 Highland Locality withheld, ♂, 14th April to 6th June (*Brit. Birds* 73: 500), locality was Bettyhill, Sutherland.

(North America; winters to Central America) Assessment of records of this species since December 1993 is the responsibility of local recorders, but earlier records are still assessed and listed by the Committee.

Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis* (0, 18, 6)

Ayrshire Martnaham Loch, ♂, 13th-17th September, photo. (B. Orr *et al.*).

Cornwall Argal Reservoir, ♂, since 1996 (*Brit. Birds* 90: 464) to 15th January; same, Suthians Reservoir, 21st January to 13th April, 10th July. Loe Pool, ♂, ♀, 18th June to 20th September, ♂ to 27th, photo. (S. Bury, D. S. Flumm *et al.*) (plates 114 & 115); first-winter ♀, 19th October (S. M. Christophers *et al.*).

Highland St John's Loch, Caithness, ♂, since 1996 (*Brit. Birds* 90: 464) to 20th January.



▲ 111. Female Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis*, East Yorkshire, 9th January 1997 (Iain H. Leach).

Yorkshire, East Tophill Low, ♀, 9th January to 20th April, photo. (E. Hediger, R. Lyon, F. X. Moffatt *et al.*) (plate 111).

IRELAND

Armagh Oxford Island, Lough Neagh, ♂, 31st December, presumed returning individual.

Londonderry Gransha Lake, ♂, 10th May.

1996 Kerry Lough Gill, ♂, 19th-24th March (*Irish Birds* 6: 69).

(Western North America; winters south and east to Colombia) It is perhaps no great surprise that a crop of three females should appear so soon after the long-expected first in Cornwall, in the autumn of 1996. It really would have been a surprise, however, if the pair which took up residence at Helston Loe Pool had been the first species of Nearctic duck to have attempted to breed in Britain, though the birds' initial behaviour did raise such hopes. The Irish records are the second and third, following the male which put in annual appearances during 1988-95 in Northern Ireland.

King Eider *Somateria spectabilis* (62, 89, 7)

Fife Tayport, ♂♂, 10th January to at least 26th February, two, 25th January, 26th February (D. E. Dickson, N. Elkins, G. Smith *et al.*); presumed one of same, 2nd November (I. Wanders); both presumed same as 1996 (*Brit. Birds* 90: 465). Leven area, ♀, 15th July to 16th September (K. D. Shaw *et al.*); presumed same as Lothian, 1996 (*Brit. Birds* 90: 465), and Methil, Fife, 1994 (*Brit. Birds* 88: 503).

Moray & Nairn Lossiemouth area, ♂, 12th January to at least 2nd February, 27th November to 11th December (per M. J. H. Cook); presumed same as 1996 below.

Northeast Scotland Girdleness, ♂, 23rd-31st July (S. A. Reeves *et al.*); presumed same, Blackdog, 27th September (O. Campbell per A. Webb).

Northumberland Newbiggin-by-the-Sea, and Lynemouth area, ♂, age uncertain, 10th-17th September (M. G. Anderson, I. Fisher *et al.*).

Orkney Stronsay, first-summer ♂, 6th May (J. F. & Mrs S. M. Holloway).

Shetland Fetlar, ♂, 23rd May (D. Suddaby); presumed same, Haroldswick, Unst, 24th (R. Baatsen, M. Lawson). Raewick, Redayre and Tresta area, ♂, since 14th September 1996 (*Brit. Birds* 90: 465) to at least 23rd April; returned 7th November to end of year (per K. Osborn). Mousa Sound, two ♂♂, 2nd January (P. M. Ellis *et al.*), one since 17th November 1996 (*Brit. Birds* 90: 465); presumed one of same, 22nd December (P. M. Ellis). Trondra, ♂, 23rd June to 24th July (J. D. Okill *et al.*). Whalsay, ♂, 11th November (N. D. Poleson *et al.*).

1989 Caernarfonshire See 1989 Gwynedd below.

1989 Gwynedd Aberdysynni, ♀, 13th August, presumed same as Black Rock Sands, 28th January to 23rd September 1989 (*Brit. Birds* 83: 454; 84: 463). Locality 28th January to 5th

February was Black Rock Sands, Criccieth, Caernarfonshire; locality 29th May to 8th October was Aberdysynni, Meirionnydd (R. I. Thorpe *et al.*).

1990 Meirionnydd (then Gwynedd) Aberdysynni, ♀, 28th April to 8th May (R. I. Thorpe *et al.*); presumed same as 1989 above.

1995 Argyll Uisaed Point, ♂, 26th March to 1st April (A. Lambert, E. J. Maguire).

1995 Shetland Tresta Voe, ♂, 1st-29th June (*Brit. Birds* 89: 494), was not same as Sandwick, 26th November to at least 3rd December (per P. M. Ellis, P. V. Harvey).

1996 Moray & Nairn Lossiemouth, ♂, 13th October (I. Rowlands *et al.*); presumed returning individual of 9th October 1994 to 14th February 1995 (*Brit. Birds* 89: 493, then Grampian); probably same as Tayport, Fife, 26th November (*Brit. Birds* 90: 465).

IRELAND

Antrim Rathlin Island, adult ♂, 24th-29th April.

(Circumpolar Arctic) In Britain, the occurrences follow the now well-established pattern, but the Irish record represents only the fifth post-1958 individual there, and only the ninth ever.

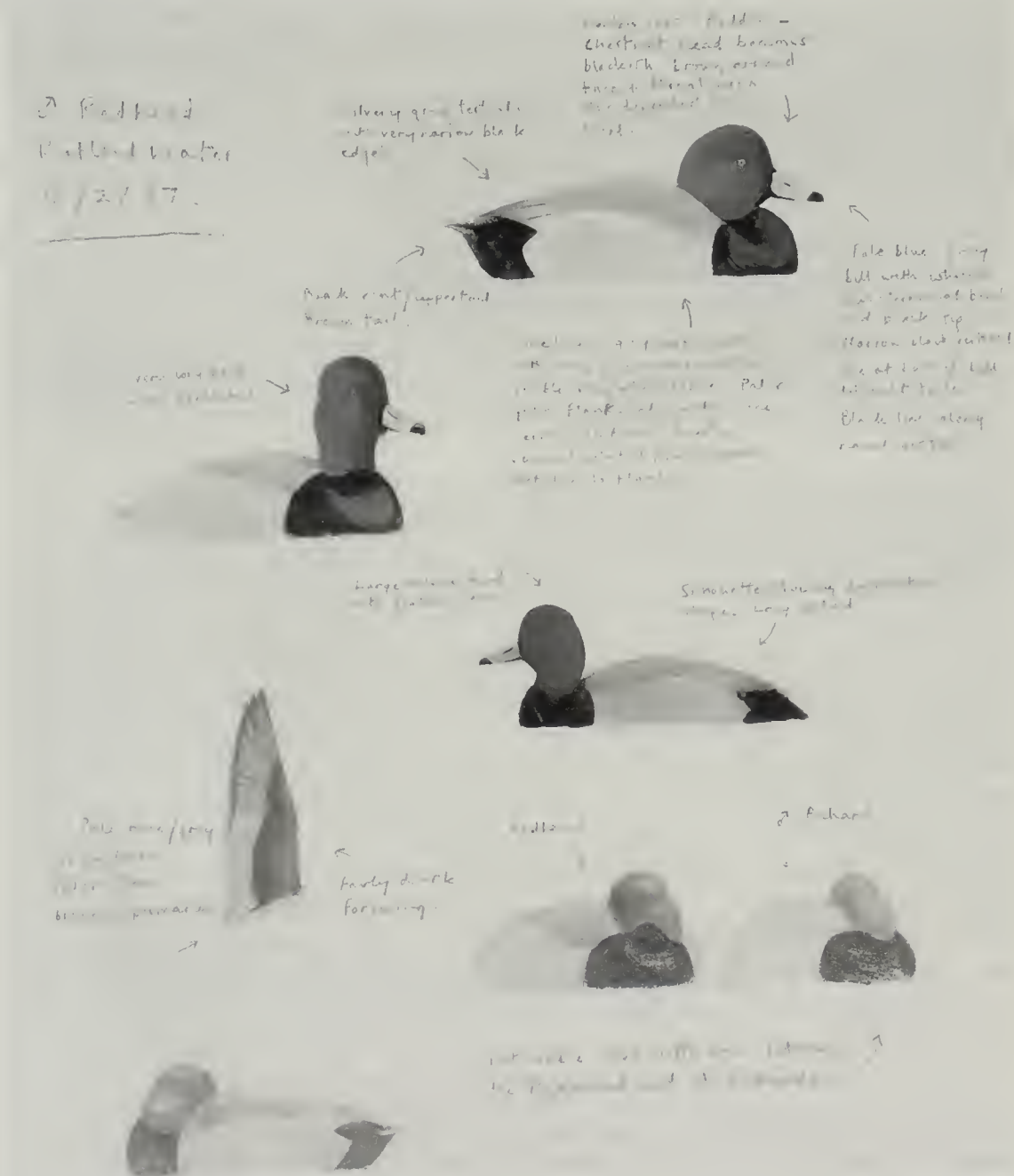


Fig. 3. Male Redhead *Aythya americana*, Leicestershire, February 1997 (J. Wright). See page 467.

Bufflehead *Bucephala albeola* (5, 4, 1)

Suffolk Heveningham Hall Lake, ♂, 29th November to at least 6th December, 1st-21st January 1998, photo. (A. Howe *et al.*).

(North America) Unlike the as-yet-undocumented East Yorkshire individual in 1997, this bird was definitely not carrying a ring, despite reports to the contrary, though that is not positive evidence in favour of a wild origin.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans* (5, 249, 9)

Cleveland/North Yorkshire Leven Valley, 28th April (G. Icton).

Derbyshire Carr Vale, 22nd April (M. A. Beevers, R. Box).

Dorset Verne Common, 22nd April (C. E. Richards, C. White). Blacknor Point, Portland, two, 24th April (G. Walbridge, C. White, H. G. Wood Homer).

Dumfries & Galloway Loch Ryan, 9th August (C. Baines).

Orkney North Ronaldsay, 2nd-13th May, photo. (M. Gray *et al.*); presumed same as Shetland.

Shetland Kergord, Scalloway and Mid Yell area, 15th May to at least 18th August, photo. (P. M. Ellis, J. Mitchell *et al.*) (plate 117); presumed same as Orkney.

Suffolk Benacre, 16th March (C. A. Buttle, A. Riseborough, D. Walden); same, Lowestoft, 16th (N. Skinner).

Yorkshire, North See Cleveland/North Yorkshire above.

Yorkshire, South Near Maltby, 27th April (R. & Mrs J. Hardcastle, A. Hirst).

1994 Essex Great Wakering, 28th April (P. Low).

IRELAND

1980 Cork Garryvoe and Ballycotton, 20th April to 13th May (*Irish Birds* 6: 71).

(Most of Eurasia, Africa and Australia) Claims of this easy-to-identify (but difficult-to-prove) species provide many a Committee member's headache: the recurring 'nightmare' is of multiple-recirculation batches, made up solely of reports of this species. The 1980 Co. Cork record becomes the first for Ireland, predating the one at Killoughter, Co. Wicklow, on 11th May 1981 (*Brit. Birds* 75: 496).

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* (many, 23, 1)

Ceredigion Tregaron, first-year, 12th November (P. E. Davis, L. R. Holliwell, A. Webb *et al.*).

Cheshire Chelford, first-year, 28th October (S. & Mrs G. Barber).

Norfolk Burnham Overy, first-year, 28th October (I. Barton, K. Rosewarne, C. Symes *et al.*).

(Southwest Greenland, Iceland and northern Eurasia) The first since 1994. With the improving fortunes of the re-established population in northwest Scotland, an increasing number of unmarked immatures are 'on the loose', making it progressively more difficult to ascertain the likely origin of many individuals. The credentials of this bird are, however, as good as any; having possibly arrived from across the North Sea, it made good progress, traversing the country aided by a strong easterly tailwind, travelling the 210 km to Cheshire in under five hours. It then resurfaced in Wales, more than two weeks later, the sight of it 'attended to' by up to eight Red Kites *Milvus milvus* and a Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo* more than just reward for the party that was 'dipping' on a Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica* present the previous day.

In Ireland, an immature eagle *Haliaeetus* at Lough Beg, Co. Londonderry, on 22nd December 1996 was either this species or Bald Eagle *H. leucocephalus* (*Northern Ireland Bird Rep.* 1996: 38; *Irish Birds* 6: 71).

Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus* (100, 569, 17)

Dorset Durlston Head, ♀, 26th September (S. J. Morrison).

Kent Stodmarsh, ♂, 5th May (D. Tutt).

Leicestershire Kelham Bridge, near Ravenstone, first-summer ♂, 9th-10th June, photo. (I. Merrill *et al.*).

Norfolk East Ruston, ♂, 11th-17th May, photo. (J. S. Hampshire, A. J. Kane *et al.*) (plates 118-120); presumed same, Hickling, 17th-18th (R. & Mrs L. Stimpson). Burnham Norton, ♂, 14th May (Mr & Mrs M. Stones, R. A. Stroud). Stiffkey, ♂, age uncertain, 29th May (A. I. Bloomfield, J. R. McCallum). Winterton, ♀, 8th June (I. N. Smith).

Norfolk/Suffolk Near Herringfleet, first-summer ♂, 14th May (P. R. Allard).

Northamptonshire Earl's Barton Gravel-pits, first-summer ♂, 7th-8th June, photo. (P. Britten *et al.*).

Outer Hebrides Balivanich, Benbecula, ♀, 23rd May (P. R. Boyer).

Oxfordshire Near Merton, ♀, 23rd to at least 25th June, photo. (B. Batchelor *et al.*).

Suffolk Westleton Heath, first-summer ♂, 11th May (J. C. Eaton). Minsmere, first-summer ♂, 14th-18th May (G. R. Welch *et al.*); ♀, 30th-31st May (D. Fairhurst, P. Green, G. R. Welch *et al.*). See also Norfolk/Suffolk above.

Surrey Near Shamley Green, first-summer ♂, 3rd July, injured, taken into care, photo., released in good health, Thursley Common, 30th May 1998 (D. M. Harris, Hydestile Wildlife Hospital *et al.*).

Yorkshire, East Spurn, first-summer ♂♂, 4th June (J. Cudworth); 7th-8th June, photo. (A. Archer, S. J. Standing).

1992 Lothian Yellowcraig, first-summer ♂, remains of, 5th July, photo. (A. Bain per I. J. Andrews).

(East Europe to Central Siberia; winters Africa) A return to a more-typical series of records, with just one in autumn. The individual in the Outer Hebrides is only the second there, following a male on Benbecula during 16th-21st June 1973 (*Brit. Birds* 67: 318-319). In the Channel Islands, there was a female at Tourgis Hill, Alderney, on 18th June 1997.

Gyr Falcon *Falco rusticolus* (many, 123, 2)

Orkney Hoy, adult, white phase, 22nd March (S. Dunnet, J. R. L. Hogarth *et al.*).

Outer Hebrides Hirta, St Kilda, white phase, 19th April, photo. (K. Douglas, S. Murray).

IRELAND

1996 Donegal Tory Island, 24th April (*Irish Birds* 6: 72).

(Circumpolar Arctic) Very predictable in terms of both timing and location. The identification of this species has been well covered by Shirihi, Forsman, Christie & Gale in 'Field identification of large falcons in the West Palearctic' (*Brit. Birds* 91: 12-35).

Little Crake *Porzana parva* (68, 31, 1)

Kent Bough Beech Reservoir, ♂, 23rd-30th March, photo. (G. Harris, C. & Mrs M. Langton *et al.*) (plate 122).

(Central and East Europe and West Asia) What was arguably the most appreciated find of the spring departed just before the Bank Holiday, disappointing many would-be observers. Four of the last five records have been in spring, so it is perhaps surprising that the peak month is November, with seven records.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* (98, 212, 4)

Avon Oldbury-on-Severn, 17th May (A. J. Middleton).

Caernarfonshire Cors Geirch, Pwllheli, first-year, 28th March to 1st April (R. I. Thorpe, E. Urbanski *et al.*).

Essex Rainham Marsh, first-year, 10th-20th September, photo. (S. Pickering *et al.*).

Norfolk Titchwell, from 1996 (*Brit. Birds* 90: 468), throughout year.

Northamptonshire Earl's Barton Gravel-pits, 15th May, photo. (R. W. Bullock, P. Storr *et al.*).

1995 Essex Hanningfield Reservoir, ♂, ♀, 10th May (D. L. Acfield, J. T. Smith, R. Widgery *et al.*).

IRELAND

1987 Roscommon 2 km north of Clonmacnoise, 5th-6th May (*Irish Birds* 6: 72).

(Southern Eurasia, Africa, the Americas and Australia) The 1995 Essex birds were additional to the two in the Pitsea and Coryton area on 19th-22nd May (*Brit. Birds* 89: 497), which were differently marked.

Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola* (31, 50, 2)

Lancashire Pilling Lane Ends, 7th July (L. G. Blacow, S. J. Dodgson, A. Sharples *et al.*).

Norfolk Berney Marshes, 15th-17th May (P. R. Allard *et al.*); also entered Suffolk (per D. J. Holman); same, Burnham Norton, 26th (R. Q. Skeen), Titchwell, 1st-8th June, 6th July, intermittently, 14th-21st, photo. (M. L. Hawkes, S. J. Patient *et al.*), Holme, 9th July (per G. E. Dunmore), Snettisham, 19th (per G. E. Dunmore), also Cley, Holkham. Metton and Felbrigg area, first-winter, 12th-28th October, photo. (N. R. & Miss F. A. Stocks *et al.*) (plate 123); also in Suffolk.

Suffolk Corton, 29th September (P. Ransome), presumed same as Norfolk.

1996 Suffolk Dunwich, 8th June (*Brit. Birds* 90: 468), finder/identifier was B. J. Small.

(South Europe, Southwest Asia and Africa; winters Africa) It is now safe to assume that the adult in Norfolk is that which has put in annual appearances since 1994; the total is therefore adjusted by one to reflect this. As a result, the other two birds become the first 'new blood' since that bird's arrival in 1994.

Black-winged Pratincole *Glareola nordmanni* (5, 26, 1)

Lancashire Martin Mere, 22nd August to 16th September, photo. (H. Shorrocks *et al.*).

1996 Cumbria See 1996 Lancashire below.

1996 Lancashire Leighton Moss and Mid Foulshaw area, first-summer, 25th-28th August (*Brit. Birds* 90: 468), latter locality is in Cumbria; observed either there, Halforth or Arnside Marsh, 25th, 27th, 28th (I. R. Kinley, K. Tate *et al.*).

(West Asia; winters Africa) The longest-stayer ever; it is possible that it was the returning 1996 individual.

Semipalmated Plover *Charadrius semipalmatus* (0, 1, 1)

Devon Dawlish Warren, first-summer, mid April to 21st September, photo. (M. Ahmad, J. E. Fortey, I. W. Lakin, K. Rylands *et al.*) (plates 106-109).

(North America) The long-awaited second, following the juvenile on St Agnes, Scilly, from 9th October to 9th November 1978 (*Brit. Birds* 73: 458-464). All the above-named observers are to be congratulated for their part in the finding, identification and high standard of submission of this record. The bird's prolonged presence at an accessible mainland site not surprisingly resulted in a mass twitch, and that, combined with the inevitable discussion that ensued, has resulted in a far wider understanding of the identification criteria for this 'difficult' species. In consequence, there will surely not be such a long wait for the next one?

Killdeer Plover *Charadrius vociferus* (9, 47, 0)

IRELAND

1996 Cork Cape Clear Island, first-year, 18th October (*Irish Birds* 6: 72).

1996 Offaly Shannon Harbour, 16th December (*Irish Birds* 6: 72).

(North America; winters USA and Central America)

American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica* (3, 206, 5)

Cumbria Bowness-on-Solway, adult, 2nd October, photo. (D. G. H. & Mrs M. West *et al.*).

Lincolnshire South Ferriby and Read's Island, age uncertain, 24th July to 13th August (G. P. Catley *et al.*).

Outer Hebrides North Boisdale, South Uist, juvenile, 2nd-3rd October (L. M. & R. J. Safford *et al.*).

Scilly St Mary's and Tresco, adult, 20th September to 12th October, photo. (J. Reynolds *et al.*). St Martin's, adult, 21st September; same, Tresco, 22nd; same, St Mary's, 23rd-24th (J. Reynolds, W. H. Wagstaff *et al.*).

1978 Kent Grove Ferry, possibly first-year, 29th April to 2nd May (*Brit. Birds* 75: 500), now accepted as *P. dominica*.

1982 Kent Elmley, adult, 16th-29th May (*Brit. Birds* 90: 469), now accepted as *P. dominica*, photo.

1995 Yorkshire, South South Anston, 31st August to 6th September (*Brit. Birds* 89: 498), identifier was M. Thomas.

IRELAND

1991 Kerry Blackrock, juvenile, 27th October (*Irish Birds* 6: 73).

1996 Cork Inchydoney, two adults, 25th October, one remaining until 29th October, other at Rosscarbery, 27th and 29th October (*Irish Birds* 6: 73).

1996 Offaly Shannonbridge, adult, 13th September (*Irish Birds* 6: 73).

1996 Wexford Tacumshin, 26th May, moved to Co. Wicklow, see below. Killag, juvenile, 18th October. (*Irish Birds* 6: 73)

1996 Wicklow Kilcoole, 6th-8th June, believed to be Tacumshin individual, see 1996 Wexford (*Irish Birds* 6: 73).

(Arctic North America and extreme Northeast Asia; winters South America) The Committee's review of 'Lesser Golden Plover' records has now been completed.

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* (3, 40, 0)

1996 Cambridgeshire Swaffham Prior Fen, first-summer, 14th-27th April, photo. (R. Grimmett, A. Long *et al.*).

(North and Northeast Asia, and Alaska; winters southern Asia, Australia and western North America) The first blank year for a decade. This species shows a very strong bias of adults in late summer/early autumn, that period accounting for 70% of the records. The additional 1996 record is noteworthy, therefore, being only the third spring occurrence, following records in May 1992 and March 1996.

American/Pacific Golden Plover *P. dominica/fulva* (6, 265, 7)

Kent Pegwell Bay, adult, 12th June (D. C. Gilbert).

Suffolk Walberswick, first-summer, 26th May (C. S. & H. Waller).

1978 Kent See American Golden Plover.

1982 Kent See American Golden Plover.

1996 Cornwall Land's End, 28th January (R. Andrew).

(Ranges: see above) The totals include those specifically identified.

White-tailed Lapwing *Vanellus leucurus* (0, 4, 0)

1984 Shropshire Locality withheld, 24th-25th May (*Brit. Birds* 78: 545; 79: 294), was near Telford.

(South Russia and Middle East, and West Central Asia)

Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla* (2, 84, 1)

Orkney Deerness, adult, 25th July (K. E. Hague).

IRELAND

1996 Donegal Tory Island, juvenile, 14th-15th September (*Irish Birds* 6: 73).

1996 Dublin Sandymount, juvenile, 21st-28th August (*Irish Birds* 6: 73).

1996 Wexford Tacumshin, juvenile, 6th-13th October (*Irish Birds* 6: 73).

(North America; winters Central and South America) Only the fourth record for the Northern Isles and the third adult, the previous two having been in late spring.

Western Sandpiper *Calidris mauri* (1, 6, 1)

Lothian Musselburgh, first-summer or adult, 9th-25th August, probably since 25th July, photo. (I. J. Andrews *et al.*) (plate 125).

IRELAND

1996 Wexford The Cull, adult, 20th-21st August (*Irish Birds* 6: 73).

(North America; winters southern USA and Central America) This represents only the eighth record, and the sixth for Britain, where the last twitchable birds were way back in 1973. Previous occurrences have been in September (three) and in August (two), with singles in May/June and July. One can fully sympathise with the initial confusion, particularly when one recalls the events of the infamous 'Felixstowe stint' back in 1982 (*Brit. Birds* 79: 617-621). This bird's true identity became apparent at the British Birdwatching Fair at Rutland Water in August 1997, when a photograph was shown to Killian Mullarney, who noted that the bird had completed its moult into winter plumage, the timing of which was a good two months too early for Semipalmated. Further close examination of the series of photographs revealed bill structure, face pattern, breast pattern and lone primary projecting beyond the longest tertial that confirmed the identification beyond doubt. It is possible that a winter-plumaged stint observed at the site on 12th June was the same bird. The 1996 Irish record is only the second there, following a juvenile at North Slob, Co. Wexford, during 3rd-6th September 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 478).

Long-toed Stint *Calidris subminuta* (0, 3, 0)

IRELAND

1996 Cork Ballycotton, 15th-16th June (*Irish Birds* 6: 73).

(Breeds Siberia; winters India, Southeast Asia and Australia) Only the third record and the first for Ireland. Previous records were at Marazion, Cornwall, in June 1970 and a juvenile at Saltholme Pool, Cleveland, in August-September 1982 (*Brit. Birds* 89: 12-24; 85: 429-436).

White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis* (24, 397, 2)

Norfolk Cley, adult, 9th-14th July (D. H. Russell *et al.*); another adult, 17th-19th (I. K. Johnson *et al.*).

1996 Lothian Aberlady, age uncertain, 25th August (I. M. Thomson).

1996 Norfolk Salthouse, 2nd-8th November (*Brit. Birds* 90: 471), to 5th only. See also 1996 Suffolk below.

1996 Suffolk Breydon, south shore, adults, 16th July, two 29th (*Brit. Birds* 90: 471), first date 23rd, not 16th (per D. F. Walsh); locality is in recording area of Suffolk but in administrative county of Norfolk.

IRELAND

1993 Wexford Tacumshin, adult, 8th August (*Irish Birds* 6: 73).

1995 Wexford Tacumshin, adult, 13th August; adult, 30th August (*Irish Birds* 6: 73).

1996 Kerry Blackrock, first-winter, 10th-15th October (*Irish Birds* 6: 73).

1996 Wexford Tacumshin, adult, 3rd-9th August; two adults and four juveniles during 5th-10th October: adult 5th-10th, juvenile 5th-6th, two juveniles 6th-10th, adult and juvenile 8th-10th (*Irish Birds* 6: 73).

1996 Wicklow Broadlough, adult, 7th September (*Irish Birds* 6: 73).

(Northern North America; winters southern South America) The poorest showing since 1992, but this Norfolk duo is thoroughly in keeping with the pattern of this species in Britain & Ireland, a subject which was recently discussed by M. J. Rogers (*Brit. Birds* 91: 283-285). The multiple occurrence in Co. Wexford in October 1996 is unprecedented, the date and

predominance of juveniles further evidence that birds in the West arrive via a more direct, transatlantic route. The additional 1996 records advance the total for last year to a record 26.

Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii* (4, 196, 8)

Cleveland Coatham Marsh, adult, 10th August (M. A. Blick, M. Corner).

Cornwall Gannel Estuary, age uncertain, 3rd August (S. M. Christophers *et al.*). Hayle, juvenile, 31st August (L. P. Williams *et al.*). Devoran, juvenile, 10th to at least 18th September, photo. (M. May *et al.*) (plate 126).

Gwent Llandegfedd Reservoir, juvenile, 26th September to 4th October, photo. (S. D. S. Bosanquet *et al.*).

Norfolk Cantley, juvenile, 30th September to 10th October, photo. (B. Jarvis *et al.*).

Scilly Bryher and Tresco, juvenile, 30th August to 12th September, photo. (B. Thomas *et al.*).

Yorkshire, East Tophill Low, adult, 16th August (T. Dixon, P. W. Izzard *et al.*).

1996 Derbyshire Carsington Water, adult, 23rd July (J. Bradley, S. L. Thorpe).

1996 Kent Sandwich Bay, age uncertain, 4th October (D. Howe) (*Brit. Birds* 90: 519), now considered acceptable.

IRELAND

1994 Cork Ballycotton, adult, 6th-7th August; juvenile, 27th-28th August (*Irish Birds* 6: 74).

1994 Kerry Blackrock Strand, juvenile, 3rd-5th September (*Irish Birds* 6: 74).

1995 Kerry Blackrock Strand, juvenile, 15th-17th September (*Brit. Birds* 90: 476), also 11th September. Smerwick Harbour, 15th September. (*Irish Birds* 6: 74)

1996 Clare Quilty, juvenile, 8th-10th October (*Irish Birds* 6: 74).

1996 Cork Ballycotton, adult, 31st May to 2nd June; juvenile, 25th-31st August (*Irish Birds* 6: 74).

(North America and northeastern Siberia; winters South America) A return to a more-typical pattern of a predominance of juveniles in the Southwest, but a couple more East Coast adults, indicating that some, at least, arrive via a circuitous route, more in keeping with the preceding species' pattern of vagrancy.

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata* (5, 18, 1)

Cleveland Long Drag Pool, adult, 26th August, photo. (T. Francis *et al.*).

(Northeast Siberia; winters New Guinea and Australasia) The third record for Cleveland and typically of an adult in what has become the peak month, boasting ten records. As is the case for other Far Eastern wader species, there is a paucity of records of juveniles, there having been only four such records (one in August and three in October).

Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus* (23, 172, 3)

Kent Cliffe, 31st May, photo. (R. M. Andrews, P. Larkin *et al.*).

Lincolnshire Gibraltar Point, adult, 4th August, video. (M. Anderson, K. Wilson *et al.*).

Norfolk Scolt Head, 3rd-4th June (N. M. Lawton, M. E. S. Rooney).

1996 Norfolk Titchwell, juvenile, 31st August (P. W. Atkinson *et al.*).

IRELAND

1996 Cork Ballycotton, adult, 2nd May (*Irish Birds* 6: 74).

1996 Down Belfast Harbour Pools, 13th-14th May (*Northern Ireland Bird Rep.* 1996: 50), not 13th-14th July as given in *Irish Birds* (6: 74).

1996 Wexford Tacumshin, adult, 19th-20th May (*Irish Birds* 6: 74).

(North Eurasia; winters southern Asia and Australia) Another poor showing. Recorded annually since 1972, records of this species reached a peak in the 1980s, averaging nearly nine birds a year, with a record 13 in 1988.

Since then, numbers have fallen to just over five per annum in the present decade.

Stilt Sandpiper *Micropalama himantopus* (1, 25, 1)

Suffolk Minsmere, adult, 7th-13th September, photo. (D. Eaton, B. J. Small *et al.*) (plate 127).

(North America; winters South America) The first since 1990. There are no surprises with the date or location, and this becomes the third record for that site. This species shows a very strong late-summer/early-autumn bias, arrival dates peaking in August (ten) followed by July (six) and September (five), with just a single in October; the remainder were all in spring (three in April-May). The sole record of a juvenile was in Ireland, in Co. Cork in September 1991.

Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*

G. g. delicata (–, 1, 0)

IRELAND

1991 Londonderry Coleraine, juvenile, shot, 28th October (*Northern Ireland Bird Rep.* 1996: 52; *Irish Birds* 6: 75).

(Northern North America; winters southern USA south to Brazil) A 'first' for Britain & Ireland and the West Palearctic. The Dutch rarities committee (CDNA) treats this taxon, colloquially known as 'Wilson's Snipe', as specifically distinct from Common Snipe on the basis of differences in morphology, vocalisations and drumming display (*Dutch Birding* 20: 22-32).

Great Snipe *Gallinago media* (180, 94, 1)

Shetland Fair Isle, 14th September (N. C. Ward).

(Northeast Europe and Northwest Asia; winters Africa) The poorest showing since 1992, but one further record remains under consideration. Since 1958, 86% of the records have come from the eastern half of Britain and, of those, the Northern Isles account for half. Of the remaining 11 occurrences, five, inexplicably, come from Scilly prior to 1974.

Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus* (9, 185, 5)

Breconshire Llangorse Lake, juvenile, 18th-21st October (V. A. King, M. F. Peers *et al.*).

Carmarthenshire Penclacwydd, age uncertain, intermittently, 30th November to 10th December (C. Harper, P. Rollin *et al.*).

Kent Elmley, adult, intermittently, 8th July to 7th December (G. W. Allison *et al.*).

Lothian Gladhouse Reservoir, juvenile, 2nd-8th October, photo. (M. A. Wilkinson *et al.*).

Norfolk Titchwell, adult, 10th June, photo. (R. Kimber, R. Q. Skeen *et al.*).

(North America and Northeast Siberia; winters USA and Central America) A fairly typical year. Dowitcher identification and ageing was recently reviewed by Dr R. J. Chandler (*Brit. Birds* 91: 93-106).

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* (12, 86, 2)

Lothian Musselburgh, adult, 18th-19th May, photo. (B. Robertson, G. Thompson *et al.*).

Sussex, East Icklesham and Pett Level, adult, 11th August (P. M. Troake *et al.*).

1994 Flintshire River Clwyd near Rhuddlan, adult, 9th-27th August, photo. (C. Rowley, R. I. Thorpe *et al.*).

(Southeast Europe, West and East Asia; winters Africa, southern Asia and Australia) Two very typical records in terms of dates; August (27 records) and May (25 records) are the peak months for arrivals. The Lothian individual is only the eighth for Scotland.

Greater Yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca* (12, 23, 0)**1996 Devon** Braunton, 29th May (A. & Mrs P. Symons, J. Turner *et al.*).

IRELAND

1962 Antrim Bog Meadows, Belfast, 14th-16th April (*Irish Bird Rep.* 11: 20).**1995 Kerry** Tralee Bay, 17th November to 3rd December (*Irish Birds* 6: 75).

(North America; winters USA south to southern South America) This species has now occurred in every month except June; with this record, May and September are now the peak months for arrival (each with six records). The most popular location is Scilly, with four records, but, surprisingly, there has been only one post-1958 record there, way back in 1975.

Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* (35, 216, 6)**Cornwall** Hayle, adult, 28th August to 12th September, photo. (C. C. Barnard *et al.*).**Kent** Dungeness, adult, 22nd July to 8th August, photo. (P. G. Akers, C. Westlake *et al.*).**Lancashire** Leighton Moss, juvenile, at least 13th September, photo. (J. Leedal, P. Woodruff). Banks and Marshside Marshes and Martin Mere, first-winter, intermittently, 18th October to 1998, photo. (T. Baker, B. Woolley *et al.*); with another first-winter, Banks Marsh, 26th December (P. J. Hornby, R. Jackson *et al.*), there or Martin Mere to 1998 (P. J. Hornby *et al.*).**Wight, Isle of** Bembridge, 6th March (D. J. Brazier).**1996 Cheshire** Gatewarth, intermittently, 11th-22nd April; same, Houghton Green, 23rd April to 1st May (*Brit. Birds* 90: 479), at latter locality, 21st April (F. Duff).

IRELAND

1995 Down Comber Estuary, 28th April (*Brit. Birds* 90: 479) was 28th August.**1996 Cork** Lissagriffin, 8th-10th October (*Irish Birds* 6: 75).**1996 Wexford** Ring Marsh, 4th-5th May, presumed same Tacumshin, 19th May to 21st July, presumed same The Cull, 18th August to at least 19th October (*Irish Birds* 6: 75).

(North America; winters southern USA, Central and South America) The 'multiple' occurrence in Lancashire is not without precedent, but the only previous instances in Britain were both in 1953: duos in Kent in April and in Greater London/Surrey in September. Such occurrences have been more frequent in Ireland, though, with a record four together at Akeragh, Co. Kerry, in August 1973 (*Brit. Birds* 67: 322), with further multiples of three (once) and two (four occasions).

Solitary Sandpiper *Tringa solitaria* (6, 23, 0)

(Northern America; winters Central and South America) None in Britain, but a juvenile at Castel, Guernsey, Channel Islands, during 25th-28th August. The last in Britain was on Fair Isle, Shetland, in September 1992, but a major prize would be a truly twitchable mainland bird, of which the last one was in Cornwall in 1980.

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus* (3, 44, 1)**Northeast Scotland** Loch of Strathbeg, 9th May (S. Bowie, A. Burnett, C. Shaw).**1996 Clyde** River Leven, 22nd-30th September (*Brit. Birds* 90: 479), correct locality was Clyde Estuary, Dumbarton.

IRELAND

1996 Wexford Rosslare Backstrand, adult, 24th August to 26th September (*Irish Birds* 6: 49-50, 75).

(Northeast Europe and Siberia; winters Africa, South Asia and Australia) Only the sixth for Scotland, on a classic date. The Co. Wexford record is the first for Ireland.

Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia* (6, 112, 1)**Cleveland** Long Drag Pool, juvenile, 16th-29th September, photo. (T. Francis *et al.*).**1975 Highland** Locality withheld, pair with nest, four eggs, unsuccessful (*Brit. Birds* 69: 288-292), was on Skye.

(North America; winters USA south to Uruguay) Another poor year, but the last blank was in 1988. This species shows a strong southwesterly bias in Britain, that region accounting for some 35% of the total, so it is perhaps surprising that up to and including 1996 there were only 11 Irish records, representing less than 10% of the total.

Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor* (1, 264, 5)**Caernarfonshire** Llanfairfechan, first-winter, 21st October, 3rd November (R. Evans per R. I. Thorpe); same as Flintshire.**Flintshire** Point of Air, 24th September to 6th October, photo. (C. Rowley, R. I. Thorpe *et al.*).**Moray & Nairn** Findhorn Bay, adult, 11th-12th September (D. M. Pullan *et al.*).**Northumberland** Cresswell Pond, juvenile to first-winter, 22nd-27th September, photo. (R. Dodds, I. Fisher *et al.*).**Surrey** Staines Reservoirs, first-winter, 5th-13th September, photo. (T. G. Ball, C. & D. K. Lamsdell, D. J. Morris *et al.*).**Yorkshire, East** Beacon Ponds, Kilnsea, age uncertain, 2nd September (K. Gillon *et al.*).**1990 Cheshire** Burton Marsh, juvenile to first-winter, 5th October (*Brit. Birds* 87: 529), first noted 2nd.

(North America; winters South America) An average showing for the present decade. There were only 35 records prior to 1970, after which there was a marked increase, peaking in the 1980s, with an average of ten per year including the record year, 1980, when there were 20. Since then, there has been a noticeable slump.

Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla* (2, 79, 7)**Cornwall** Drift Reservoir, adult, 22nd April, video. (J. P. Chapple, G. Hobin *et al.*). Maenporth, second-winter, 29th December (R. C. James, A. & C. Mason *et al.*).**Gloucestershire** Hempsted, adult, 10th November (J. D. Sanders *et al.*).**Lincolnshire** Cleethorpes, adult, 21st October (C. J. McNaghten).**Lothian** Musselburgh, adult, 27th April (M. A. Wilkinson).**West Midlands** Bartley Reservoir, adult, 12th October (S. Roberts *et al.*).**1996 Devon** Portworthy Dam, 13th-21st September (*Brit. Birds* 90: 483), first noted, Chelston Meadow, 13th, daily to 21st, but roosted at Portworthy Dam (per M. K. Ahmad).**1996 Highland** Dornoch, Sutherland, first-summer/second-winter, 13th August to 12th October, photo. (A. Vittery, A. Wight *et al.*).

IRELAND

Armagh Albert Basin, Newry, first-winter, 5th-12th March.**1996 Galway** Nimmo's Pier, first-winter, 29th January to 5th February (*Irish Birds* 6: 77).**1996 Kerry** Tralee, first-winter, 8th April to 10th May, presumed same Smerwick Harbour, 4th-5th June (*Irish Birds* 6: 77).**1996 Londonderry** Coleraine, third-winter, 3rd-16th November (*Northern Ireland Bird Rep.* 1996: 60; *Irish Birds* 6: 77).

(North America and Caribbean; winters USA to South America) Another good year. The total for 1996 moves on to 11, equalling the previous record year of 1984.

Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan* (0, 33, 1)**Cornwall** Gannel Estuary, Newquay, adult, 18th-20th November (S. M. Christophers *et al.*).

(North America; winters South America) First recorded in Britain as

recently as 1970 (*Brit. Birds* 64: 310-314), this species maintains its status as a true rarity. Despite that, it has been recorded in all but three years since 1980. There is no real pattern geographically, though a distinct peak exists in terms of 'arrivals', with two-thirds of the records falling in the period May-August. The theory that direct transatlantic vagrancy is unlikely is perhaps confirmed by its status in Ireland: a single record up to 1996 (in May 1993).

Bonaparte's Gull *Larus philadelphia* (11, 89, 3)

Cornwall Drift Reservoir, adult, 12th February (G. Hobin). Swanpool, Falmouth, first-winter, 22nd December (R. C. James); same, Maenporth, 22nd (J. P. Chapple).

Fife Kingsbarns Beach and Cambo Sands area, adult, 18th August to 12th September, photo. (R. A. Lambert, Dr J. Wilson *et al.*).

1996 Devon Plym Estuary, first-winter, present, 28th April to 5th May (*Brit. Birds* 90: 484), finder/identifier was M. K. Ahmad.

IRELAND

1996 Londonderry Roe Estuary, adult, 19th October to 3rd November (*Brit. Birds* 90: 484), stayed until 17th November.

(North America; winters USA to Mexico) Two very typical records, but the Fife individual becomes only the seventh for the Scottish mainland.

Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis* (0, 1799, -)

1987 Sussex, East The Crumbles, Eastbourne, first-summer, 6th June (*Brit. Birds* 81: 564), now withdrawn by observer.

(North America) Records of this species were considered by the Committee only until 1987, but those for the earlier period are still assessed and listed here.

Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*

L. a. smithsonianus (9, 19, 2)

Scilly St Mary's, first-winter, intermittently, 18th December to at least 6th April 1998, photo. (W. H. Wagstaff *et al.*).

At sea Sea area Rockall, 57°43'N 12°24'W, juvenile/first-winter, 11th September, photo. (R. W. White).

IRELAND

Antrim North Foreshore Tip, Belfast, juvenile/first-winter, 15th February.

1996 Cork Ballycotton, second-winter, 31st August to 1st September (*Irish Birds* 6: 80).

1996 Louth Clogher Head, second-winter, 27th December (*Irish Birds* 6: 80).

(North America) Only the third and fourth records for Britain, following first-winters in Cheshire/Merseyside in February-March 1994 and in Merseyside in March 1995 (*Brit. Birds* 89: 504). With the recent plethora of papers/articles devoted to the taxonomy and field identification of the 'large white-headed gull complex', we can expect to see a steady increase in the number of claims of many forms of 'Herring Gull'. The identification of the North American form *L. a. smithsonianus* has been dealt with by Killian Mullarney (*Birding World* 3: 96-100) and Dr Philippe J. Dubois (*Brit. Birds* 90: 314-324). Some authorities, notably the Dutch rarities committee (CDNA), treat this taxon as specifically distinct from Herring Gull *L. argentatus*, on the basis of differences in morphology and vocalisations (*Dutch Birding* 20: 22-32).

Iceland Gull *Larus glaucoides**L. g. kumlieni* (1, 54, 5)**Derbyshire** Ogston Reservoir, adult, 27th January (S. L. Thorpe).**Lancashire** Marshside Marsh, adult, 5th March (Dr B. McCarthy).**Shetland** Lerwick, second-winter, 26th January (K. Blomerly, P. M. Ellis, P. V. Harvey *et al.*); adult, 22nd October (P. V. Harvey). Scatness, adult, 21st December (P. M. Ellis, P. V. Harvey, J. D. Okill).

IRELAND

1994 Kerry Blennerville, adult, 8th March (*Irish Birds* 6: 80).**1996 Donegal** Kilcar, third-year, 21st February. Killybegs, adult, 8th March. (*Irish Birds* 6: 80)(Canada; winters North America) The first British record concerns a third-winter female in Shetland on 24th November 1869; this specimen is retained at the British Museum, Tring (*Brit. Birds* 88: 23; *Ibis* 140: 182).**Ross's Gull** *Rhodostethia rosea* (2, 73, 5)**Northeast Scotland** Kinnairds Head, adult, 31st January to 10th February, photo. (K. & Mrs L. Buchan, A. Webb *et al.*) (plate 112).**Northumberland** Black Middens, Tynemouth and Druridge Bay area, adult, 2nd May to 1st June (C. Bradshaw *et al.*).**Orkney** North Ronaldsay, first-winter, 2nd October (M. Gray); adult, 16th November (M. Gray *et al.*). Point of Ayre, Deerness, adult, 22nd November (K. E. Hague); possibly same as North Ronaldsay.

IRELAND

1995 Galway Galway Docks, adult, 27th January to 1st February (*Irish Birds* 6: 81).

(Northeast Siberia and Canada) A return to better fortunes after the poor showing last year. In the past two decades, the only blank year was 1990.

▲ 112. Adult Ross's Gull *Rhodostethia rosea*, Northeast Scotland, February 1997 (Steve Young/Birdwatch)**Ivory Gull** *Pagophila eburnea* (76, 40, 1)**Northeast Scotland** Kinnairds Head, first-winter, 24th-25th October, photo. (D. Gill, J. Hamper, A. Rigg *et al.*) (plates 104 & 105).(Arctic) Since 1958, there has been only one record of a first-winter earlier in the year, at Burry Port, Carmarthenshire, during 10th-12th October 1988 (*Brit. Birds* 83: 466).**Gull-billed Tern** *Sterna nilotica* (52, 206, 6)**Essex** Holland Haven, 16th May (M. L. Hawkes, K. Marsden, N. F. Pepper).**Shropshire** Venus Pool, 19th May (A. Matthews).**Somerset** Dunster Beach and Bilbrook, first-winter, 4th-5th October, photo. (J. White *et al.*).

Suffolk Landguard, two, 1st May (N. Odin).

Wight, Isle of St Catherine's Point, adult, 5th August (J. C. Gloyn); presumed same, 11th (M. J. Sparshott).

1996 Gower Whiteford Sands, adult or second-summer, 14th September (D. Lewis, P. Parsons); presumed same as Carmarthenshire, Gower, intermittently, 4th July to 17th August (*Brit. Birds* 90: 486), also in Ireland (see below).

IRELAND

1996 Wexford Tacumshin, second-summer or adult, 18th August, same, Rosslare Backstrand, 25th August to 1st September (*Irish Birds* 6: 81), regarded as same as individual in Gower and Carmarthenshire, south Wales, during 4th July to 17th August and 14th September (*Brit. Birds* 90: 486 and above).

(Almost cosmopolitan; nearest breeding colony is in Denmark; European population winters Africa) The numbers breeding in Denmark have declined to single figures in the 1990s (*DOFT* 90: 73; 91: 101-108).

Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia* (30, 212, 4)

Cornwall Stithians Reservoir, 28th July (G. Cockhill); presumed same, Penzance, 4th August (C. B. Cole).

Glamorgan Kenfig, 6th August (N. Donaghy).

Kent Pegwell Bay and Stodmarsh, 1st-2nd August, photo. (D. Feast, D. C. Gilbert, P. Milton *et al.*).

Norfolk Breydon, 30th July (S. Smith *et al.*).

1996 Suffolk Minsmere, two, 3rd-10th June (*Brit. Birds* 90: 487), also 11th (per D. F. Walsh).

(Almost cosmopolitan, except South America; European populations winter Africa) A fairly average year and very typical dates. Amazingly, the Stithians Reservoir record is the first for Cornwall.

Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis* (0, 7, 0)

Northumberland Farne Islands, returning ♀ of 1996 (*Brit. Birds* 90: 487), 3rd May to 31st July, photo., again paired with Sandwich Tern *S. sandwicensis*, incubating by 25th May, one egg hatched 10th June, young fledged by 8th July, colour-ringed young seen La Paracou, near Sables d'Olonne, Vendée, France, 23rd September (per B. N. Rossiter).

1993 Norfolk Scolt Head, 10th July, present 8th-15th, 21st (*Brit. Birds* 87: 533), probably ♂, now considered additional to Farne Islands individual (J. R. Williamson *et al.*).

1995 Cleveland Hartlepool, 15th July (*Brit. Birds* 89: 507), also Seaton Snook (M. Thomas).

1996 Kent Pegwell Bay, 22nd August (J. N. Hollyer, P. Milton, B. E. Wright *et al.*).

IRELAND

1996 Cork Ballycotton, adult, 7th-8th August (*Irish Birds* 6: 81), perhaps same as individual in Scilly on 2nd-4th August (*Brit. Birds* 90: 487).

(North and East Africa, east to Australia) It is perhaps worth noting that, of the four hybrid young that are known to have fledged—in 1989, 1992, 1996 and 1997—the 1996 individual bears a red colour ring on each leg in addition to a BTO ring on the right leg, whilst the 1997 individual bears a yellow colour ring on the left leg with a red colour ring and a BTO ring on the right leg. In 1996, the breeding female, 'Elsie', stayed until 13th August, so the Kent record may have been of her. The Co. Cork record is the first for Ireland.

Forster's Tern *Sterna forsteri* (0, 27, 0)

IRELAND

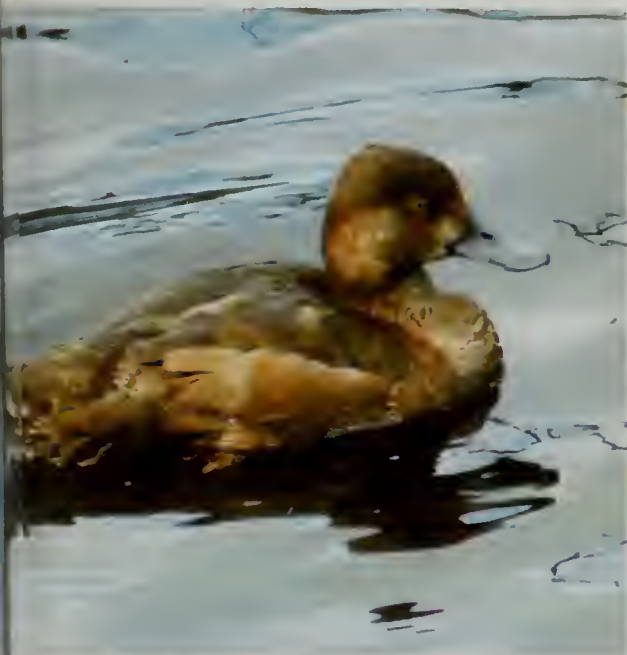
1986 Dublin North Bull Island, adult, 16th November 1985 to February 1986 (*Brit. Birds* 79: 557; 80: 545), stayed until 14th March (*Irish Birds* 6: 81).

1996 Galway Nimmo's Pier, adult, 21st February to 24th May, same 20th October into 1997 (*Irish Birds* 6: 81).

(North America; winters USA and Mexico)



▲ 113. Male Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors*, Derbyshire, March 1997 (Iain H. Leach)



▲ 114 & 115. Female (left) and male (right) Lesser Scaups *Aythya affinis*, Loe Pool, Cornwall, August 1997 (George Reszeter)

▼ 116. Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps*, South Norwood Lake, Greater London, 28th March 1997 (Jim Pattinson)





▲ 117. Black Kite *Milvus migrans*, Shetland, June/July 1997 (Bill Dalton)



▲▼ 118–120. Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus*, East Runton, Norfolk, May 1997 (Iain H. Leach)





▲ 121. Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides*, Cerney Wick, Gloucestershire, June 1997
(George Reszeter)



▲ 122. Male Little Crane *Porzana parva*, Kent, March 1997 (Iain H. Leach)

▼ 123. Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola*, Felbrigg, Norfolk, October 1997
(Robin Chittenden)





▲ 124. Spur-winged Lapwing *Hoplopterus spinosus*, Dungeness, Kent, June 1997 (George Reszeter). See Appendix 3.



▲ 125. First-summer or adult Western Sandpiper *Calidris mauri* with Great Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*, Lothian, August 1997 (Iain H. Leach)

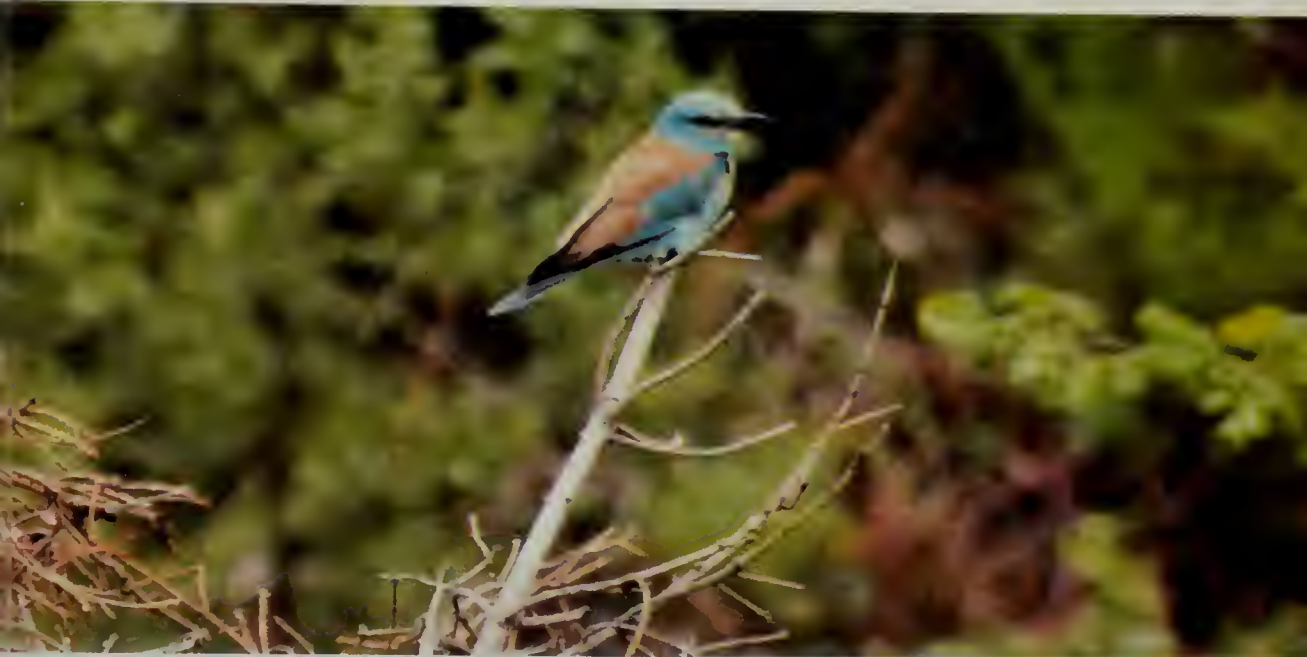
▼ 126. Juvenile Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii*, Devoran, Cornwall, 16th September 1997 (R. J. Chandler)

▼ 127. Adult Stilt Sandpiper *Micropalama himantopus*, Suffolk, September 1997 (Iain H. Leach)





▲ 128. Blue-cheeked Bee-eater *Merops superciliosus*, Asta, Shetland, June 1997
(L. Dalziel)



▲ 129. European Roller *Coracias garrulus*, Dumfries & Galloway, June 1997
(Steve Young/Birdwatch)

▼ 130. Calandra Lark *Melanocorypha calandra*, Isle of Man, May 1997 (Alan Tate)





▲ 131. Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni*, Devon, 18th February 1997 (J. Harriman)



▲ 132. Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus*, Sheringham, Norfolk, May 1997 (Iain H. Leach)

▼ 133. Female Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola*, Lancashire, May 1997 (Steve Young/Birdwatch)



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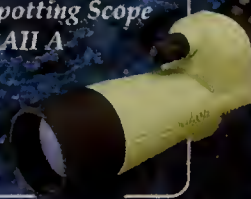
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▲ 134. Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia*, Cleveland, 19th May 1997 (J. Harriman)



▲ 135. First-winter male Siberian Rubythroat *Luscinia calliope*, Dorset, 19th October 1997 (G. Armstrong)

▼ 136. First-winter Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus*, Leicestershire, 19th October 1997 (anon.)





▲▼ 137 & 138. Pied Wheatears *Oenanthe pleschanka*, October 1997 (Steve Young/ Birdwatch): above, male, Lancashire; below left, female, Spurn, East Yorkshire



▲▼ 139 & 140. Desert Wheatears *Oenanthe deserti*, December 1997: above right, female, Musselburgh, Lothian (Gary Bellingham); below, male, Bamburgh, Northumberland (Jim Pattinson)





▲ 141. First-winter male Dark-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis* of black-throated race *atrogularis*, Derbyshire, January 1997 (Steve Young/Birdwatch)



▲ 142. Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* singing, Nottinghamshire, June 1997 (Steve Young/Birdwatch)

▼ 143. Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica*, Oxfordshire, May 1997 (George Reszeter)

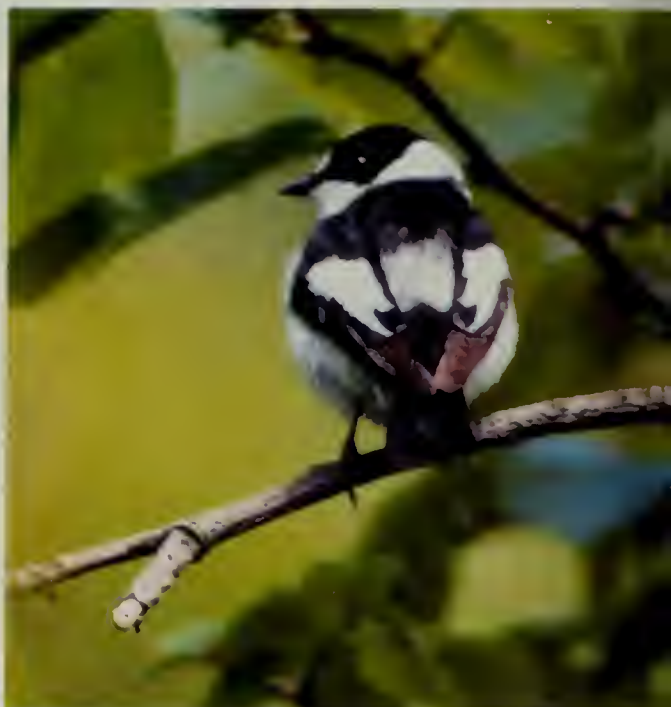




▲ 144. Hume's Warbler *Phylloscopus humei*, East Sussex, November 1997 (George Reszeter)



▲ 145. Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*, Quendale, Shetland, 23rd/24th August 1997 (Bill Jackson)



▲ 146. First-summer male Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis*, Angus & Dundee, May 1997 (Iain H. Leach)

▼ 147. Male Spectacled Warbler *Sylvia conspicillata*, Suffolk, May 1997 (Tony G. Collinson)





▲▼ 148 & 149. Adult Rosy Starlings *Sturnus roseus*: above, Anglesey, August 1997 (Gary Bellingham); below, Beeston, Norfolk, December 1997 (Iain H. Leach)



▼ 150. Male Two-barred Crossbill *Loxia leucoptera*, Fife, August 1997 (Ian Darling)





▲ 151. Blackpoll Warbler *Dendroica striata*, Scilly, October 1997 (Iain H. Leach)

▼ 152. First-winter male Common Yellowthroat *Geothlypis trichas*, Scilly, October 1997 (Steve Young/Birdwatch)



Sooty Tern *Sterna fuscata* (16, 10, 0)**1989 Fife** Isle of May, 14th July, photo. (Dr M. P. Harris, S. J. Holloway, R. Proctor).

(Tropical and subtropical islands in all oceans, also Red Sea) At the time, the Committee's statement was that, despite hours of study, no firm decision could be reached concerning whether this species or Bridled Tern *S. anaethetus* was involved (*Brit. Birds* 87: 533). Interpretation of the features shown on a submitted photograph was far from straightforward, and the whole situation was compounded by the presence of an undoubted Bridled Tern at Hauxley and Seaton Sluice, Northumberland, just two days later (*Brit. Birds* 83: 468). It was, however, the unanimous view of the present members of the Committee that the submitted descriptions left no doubts that a correct identification had been made at the time and that the photograph, though not conclusively confirming the identification, in no way detracted from it. The presence of both species along the same stretch of coastline within days of each other is not without precedent: in July 1984, a Sooty Tern in Kent and East Sussex (*Brit. Birds* 78: 559) was followed by a Bridled Tern in Dorset (*Brit. Birds* 78: 557) just two days later.

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus* (20, 101, 2)**Cambridgeshire** Buckden Gravel-pits, Huntingdonshire, 2nd May (J. S. Clark, G. D. Elliott).**Norfolk** Cley, 20th June (L. & M. Cunningham, A. Jowett) (fig. 4, on page 480).

(South Eurasia, Africa and Australia; European population winters Africa) Two very typical records in the peak period for this species. The East Anglian region has accounted for nearly one quarter of the total. In the Channel Islands, there was one at St Ouen's Pond, Jersey, during 19th-20th May 1997.

White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus* (50, 664, 14)**Cornwall** Polkerris, adult, 10th July (R. Lane).**Derbyshire** Barbrook Reservoir, juvenile, 29th August (J. Atkin).**Essex** Abberton Reservoir, juvenile, 7th September (C. McClure, S. D. Wood).**Fife** Kinghorn, juvenile, 24th August (D. Ogilvie).**Highland** Loch Maree, Wester Ross, adult, 26th May (C. Donald, D. Miller, E. Stuart).**Kent** Cliffe, adult, 23rd June (P. Larkin, D. Mercer). Stodmarsh, adult, 24th August (D. Feast, J. Veal).**Norfolk** Holkham, adult, 7th June (J. Lansdell *et al.*). Eccles-on-Sea, juvenile, 6th October (A. J. Kane). Sheringham, adult, 19th October (D. H. Sadler, T. Wright, M. Young-Powell); same, Salthouse, 19th October (G. E. Dunmore, D. J. Scott *et al.*); same, Cley, 19th October (R. Bradbury *et al.*).**Northeast Scotland** Rattray and Loch of Strathbeg, adult, 18th May (A. J. Leitch *et al.*).**Pembrokeshire** Strumble Head, adult, 15th October (S. Berry, G. H. Rees).**Somerset** Cheddar Reservoir, juvenile, 7th September (T. Raven).**Yorkshire, East** Hornsea Mere, juvenile, 21st August (Dr T. E. Giles); present, 18th-27th.**1967 Shropshire** Willey Park, adult, 10th May (E. G. Phillips, J. P. Pullman).**1996 Cumbria** Longtown, juvenile, 30th August to 6th September (*Brit. Birds* 90: 488), first noted 25th.**1996 Essex** Abberton Reservoir, juvenile, 6th-11th August (T. J. Mendham *et al.*).**1996 Oxfordshire** Farmoor Reservoir, juvenile, 24th August (J. Baker *et al.*).**1996 Wight, Isle of** Cowes, adult, 28th September (D. J. Hughes).

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1996 Dublin Swords Estuary, adult, 4th-7th August (*Irish Birds* 6: 81).

(Southeast Europe, Asia and Africa; European population winters Africa) Oddly, the unprecedented influx that affected Denmark and Sweden in mid May 1997 (*Brit. Birds* 91: 248) was not reflected in Britain.

Brünnich's Guillemot *Uria lomvia* (2, 31, 1)**Shetland** Fetlar, 26th-30th December (T. G. & J. Davies, D. Suddaby).

(Circumpolar Arctic) Amazingly, this very rare species has been recorded in all but two years since 1976. Although a large proportion of the total (18 records to date) is accounted for by corpses, nine of the last ten records have involved live birds: when will one stay for more than one day at an accessible mainland site?

Eurasian Scops Owl *Otus scops* (64, 24, 1)**Argyll** Scarinish, Tiree, killed by cat, 6th April, photo., specimen now at National Museum of Scotland (Mrs E. Robertson, M. Williamson *et al.*).

(South Europe, Russia, West Asia and Northwest Africa; winters Africa) This individual continues the rather sad saga of Scops Owls in Britain, so many of which (nine out of 21) have been found injured or dead.

Snowy Owl *Nyctea scandiaca* (many, 122, 3)**Highland** Drumochter, Badenoch & Strathspey, ♂, 9th July, photo. (J. I. R. Martin, M. O'vall) (plate 153).**Outer Hebrides** Mangersta, Lewis, ♂, 29th May to 19th June (C. Ryan *et al.*); presumed same, Drimsdale, South Uist, at least 28th June (B. Rabbitts, J. Shotton *et al.*).**Shetland** Fetlar, ♀, 22nd March to 19th April (D. Suddaby, T. Thomason *et al.*).**1972, 1973, 1974 Outer Hebrides** Localities withheld (*Brit. Birds* 66: 344; 67: 328; 69: 364); see original references for details. All related to Barvas Moor and Machair, Lewis.**1996 Highland** Ben Macdui area, second-year ♂, 17th, 25th August (*Brit. Birds* 90: 489), previously noted 8th July (A. Amphlett), 28th July (I. Rowlands *et al.*).

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1996 Mayo Inishkea North, 2nd February (*Irish Birds* 6: 82).

(Circumpolar Arctic; disperses south in some winters) Three traditional venues. It is now six years since one graced England with its presence.



▲ 153. Male Snowy Owl *Nyctea scandiaca*, Drumochter, Highland, 9th July 1997 (J. I. R. Martin)

Alpine Swift *Tachymarptis melba* (150, 382, 10)

Dorset Weston, Portland, 27th May (G. Walbridge). Durlston Country Park, 29th July (C. E. Richards *et al.*).

Hampshire Hook-with-Warsash, 26th May (D. Treacher).

Northumberland Seahouses, 30th May (J. Walton).

Sussex, East Beachy Head, two, 17th May (J. Bujok, R. J. Fairbank).

Sussex, West Worthing, 14th May (P. James).

Worcestershire Cookley, 28th April (B. Westwood).

Yorkshire, East Hornsea, 4th May (N. Calbrade, P. J. Precey *et al.*) (figs. 5 & 6, on page 499).

Yorkshire, South/West Bretton Park, 28th April (N. W. Addey, G. Taylor).

1996 Caernarfonshire Conwy River, 21st April (S. Dixon, I. Higginson).

1996 Cornwall Nanquidno, 12th June (K. A. Wilson).

(South Eurasia, Northwest and East Africa; winters Africa) A moderate showing only.

Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus* (1, 10, 1)

Norfolk Mundesley, 28th August (M. Fiszer).

(Northwest Africa and Iberia to southern Iran; winters Africa) The first to be found in Britain in August, though one was in Ireland in August 1993 (*Brit. Birds* 87: 541). This does little to establish a clear occurrence pattern, with records now falling in May, July, August, October and November.

Little Swift *Apus affinis* (0, 10, 3)

Dorset Hengistbury Head, 5th June (E. D. Lloyd).

Shetland Fetlar, 29th May (J. & T. G. Davies, D. Suddaby).

Wight, Isle of Bembridge and Foreland, 5th May, photo. (D. & M. Hunnybun, K. Turner *et al.*) (plates 102 & 103); same, Brading Marsh area, 6th (J. V. Brighten, R. C. & Mrs S. M. Newell *et al.*).

(Africa, Middle East and south Asia) A record three in a year, and the first opportunity for many to catch up with this diminutive swift. There seems no valid reason to link the Dorset and Shetland records with that on the Isle of Wight. With six records out of 12, May is now emerging as the best month for this species.

Blue-cheeked Bee-eater *Merops superciliosus* (2, 5, 1)

Shetland Bressay, Asta, Tingwall Valley and Lerwick area, 20th June to 3rd July, photo. (B. Anderson, P. Goddard, R. Johnson *et al.*) (plate 128).

(Discontinuously in North, West, Southwest, East and Northeast Africa, Middle East east to Kazakhstan, and Northwest India) The seventh record of this exquisite species, all but one of which have been found in June or July.

European Roller *Coracias garrulus* (135, 92, 2)

Dumfries & Galloway Lochaber Loch, 14th June (A. W. Reid *et al.*); present, 3rd to 30th, photo. (plate 129).

Hampshire Locality in New Forest, 25th May (E. J. Wiseman).

1984 Man, Isle of Locality between Port St Mary and Port Erin, dead in water trough, about 20th June, photo. (S. Collister per M. Wright).

(South and East Europe, West Asia and Northwest Africa) Two in a year is about average by recent standards. Details of an occurrence on the Isle of Wight had not yet been received by mid September 1998.

Calandra Lark *Melanocorypha calandra* (0, 5, 2)

Man, Isle of Langness, 17th-18th May, photo. (A. Kaye, J. Kneen, C. Sharpe *et al.*) (plate 130).

Norfolk Scolt Head, 19th May (J. Brown, N. M. Lawton, M. E. S. Rooney).

(Iberia and Morocco eastwards through the Mediterranean to Kazakhstan and Afghanistan) After the comment in last year's Report, another finally does reach mainland Britain, providing the first accepted record for the Southeast for a species which had previously shown a distinct westerly bias. These two represent the fifth and sixth British records and are the first to occur in May, April having previously been the favoured month.

Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica* (7, 298, 15)

Dorset Blacknor Point, Portland, 27th May (G. Walbridge).

Essex Hanningfield Reservoir, 29th April (J. T. Smith *et al.*).

Kent New Hythe, 8th May (M. R. Garwood *et al.*). Cliffe, 10th May (R. C. Peters).

Lothian Tyninghame, 18th-20th May (Dr M. & Mrs B. D. Griffin, S. A. Maxwell *et al.*).

Norfolk Holme, 4th May (M. McCarthy *et al.*). Breydon, 17th November (P. R. Allard).

Outer Hebrides Eochar, South Uist, 21st-22nd June, photo. (S. R. B. & Mrs L. Thompson *et al.*).

Oxfordshire Farmoor Reservoir, 8th-12th May, photo. (N. J. Hallam *et al.*) (plate 143).

Shetland Loch of Spiggie, 18th-21st May (P. M. Ellis, P. V. Harvey *et al.*).

Suffolk Livermere, 8th-9th May (J. Walshe *et al.*).

Surrey Guildford, 6th-7th, 11th-12th May (J. Gates *et al.*).

Sussex, East Beachy Head, 2nd May (P. D. Lanaway *et al.*).

Sussex, West Pagham Harbour, 2nd September (T. J. Edwards).

Wight, Isle of West High Down, 13th May (G. R. & M. J. Sparshott).

(Southern and eastern Eurasia and Africa; European population winters Africa) A typical spread of records, with no exceptionally early arrivals and, for the second year running, only one in the typical late-autumn slot. The West Sussex individual is more notable, as early-autumn occurrences are distinctly rare.

Cliff Swallow *Hirundo pyrrhonota* (0, 6, 0)

1996 Sussex, West Church Norton, juvenile, 1st October (T. J. Edwards).

(North America; winters Chile, Brazil and Argentina) This now becomes the earliest date, nine days earlier than the first British record, in Scilly in October 1983 (*Brit. Birds* 77: 37; 80: 550; 81: 449-452, 686). A Black-and-white Warbler *Mniotilta varia* was found at Beachy Head, East Sussex, the next day (*Brit. Birds* 90: 509).

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni* (1, 201, 5)

Devon Brixham, 18th January to 9th April, photo. (M. R. Langman, N. Smallbones *et al.*) (plate 131).

Kent Minster, 31st October (K. Thornton).

Scilly Tresco, 23rd October (R. A. Filby, T. Francis, D. Page).

Shetland Fair Isle, 26th September to 1st October, photo. (Dr R. Riddington, R. I. Thorpe, J. Young *et al.*); another, 27th September (J. M. Reid).

1993 Yorkshire, North Hawkser, 31st October (*Brit. Birds* 90: 493), locality is Hawsker.

(Northeast Russia to Central and East Asia; winters Southeast Asia) A fourth poor year for this species, which produced some impressive influxes in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The wintering individual echoes those at Bracknell, Berkshire, in 1984 (*Brit. Birds* 77: 226, 268, 430-431) and Pitsca, Essex, in 1994 (*Brit. Birds* 88: 529).

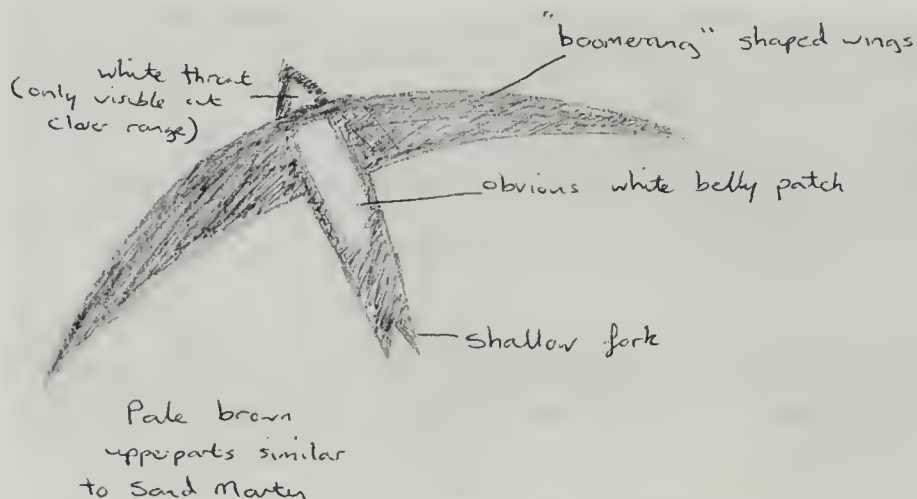
Pechora Pipit *Anthus gustavi* (13, 50, 1)

Shetland Fair Isle, 26th-29th September, photo. (I. Foster, R. Taylor *et al.*).

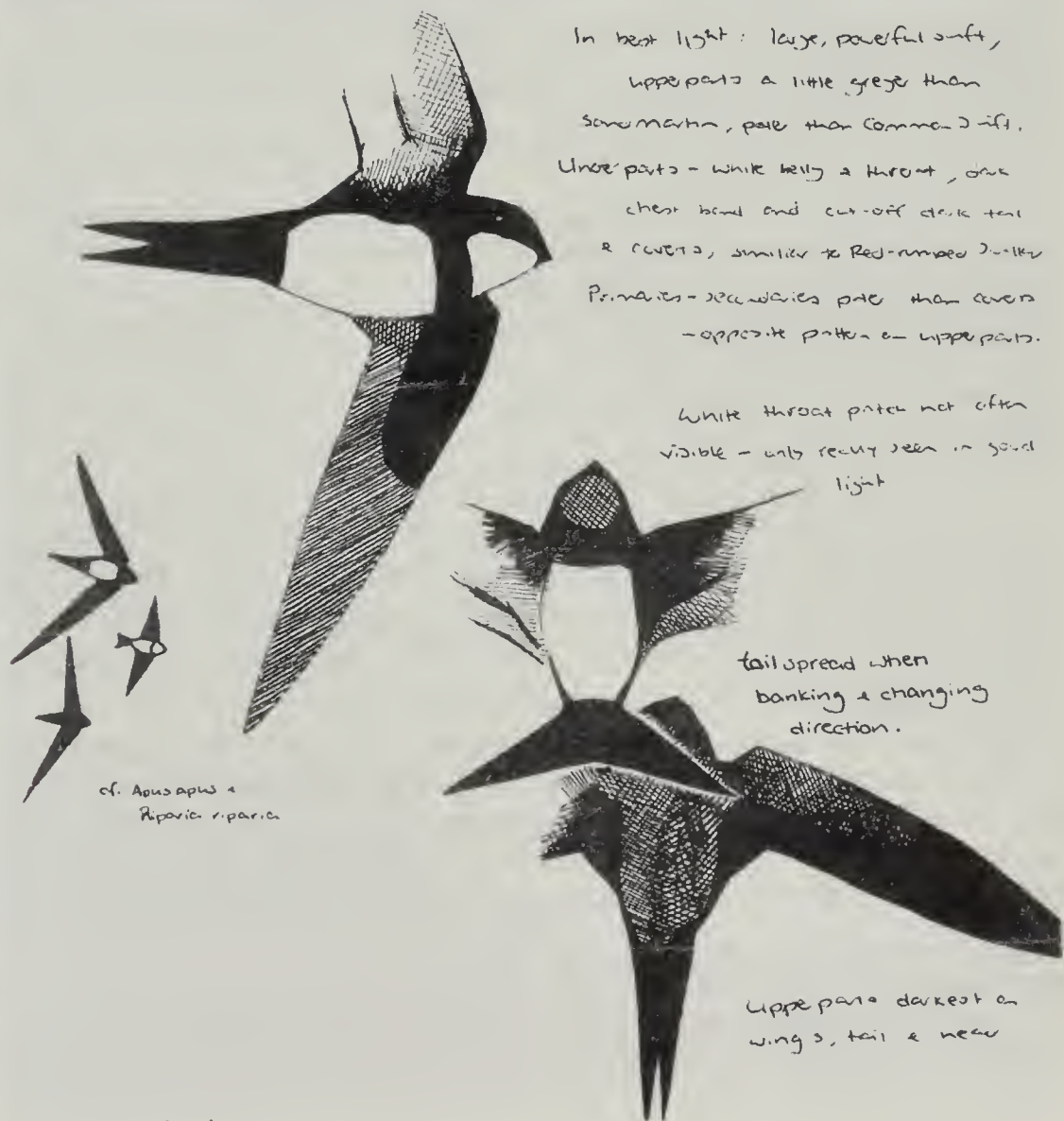
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1990 Cork Garinish, Fiskeel, 27th-28th September (*Irish Birds* 6: 50-52, 83).

(Northeast Russia to Central and East Asia; winters Southeast Asia) With only one occurrence, classic in both date and location, this is a reversal of the recent modest upward trend. The Co. Cork record is the first for Ireland.



Figs. 5 & 6. Alpine Swift *Tachymarptis melba*, East Yorkshire, May 1997 (above, Neil Calbrade; below, Philip J. Precey). See page 497.



Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus* (30, 328, 11)**Kent** Dungeness, 19th October (W. Attridge).**Norfolk** Waxham, 28th April (G. J. Etherington). Blakeney Point, 3rd-4th May (M. I. Eldridge, A. M. Stoddart *et al.*). Sheringham, 18th-19th May, photo. (K. B. & Mrs R. Shepherd *et al.*) (plate 132).**Northumberland** Farne Islands, 28th September (N. Williams).**Orkney** Waulkmill Bay, West Mainland, 19th May (T. Dean, Mrs J. Robinson-Dean). North Ronaldsay, 30th September (M. Gray).**Scilly** St Mary's, 29th-30th October (P. Trodd *et al.*).**Shetland** Fair Isle, 14th May (Dr R. Riddington *et al.*). Foula, 20th May (A. R. Mainwood). Out Skerries, 24th May (P. Crockett, I. Gordon, E. Tait).**1995 Sussex, West** Littlehampton, 23rd April (B. Akinola). Church Norton, 11th October (T. J. Edwards).

(Arctic Eurasia; winters India and Africa) Would-be claimants of 'fly-overs' of this highly mobile species are reminded that a pipit must be seen and a full account given of preferably three or more calls by an observer with prior experience of the species.

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* (2, 102, 8)**Cornwall** Maer Lake, Bude, ♂, 3rd-4th May, photo. (L. Dingain, C. Townend, S. Woods *et al.*).**Lancashire** Newton Marsh, Ribble Estuary, ♀, 4th-7th May, photo. (P. Bainbridge, A. & L. Parnell *et al.*) (plate 133).**Orkney** North Ronaldsay, first-winter, 26th-28th September; another first-winter, 28th-29th (P. J. Donnelly, S. D. Stansfield).**Scilly** St Mary's, first-winter, 4th-8th September, photo. (M. S. Scott *et al.*); presumed same, St Agnes, 5th (N. Wheatley).**Shetland** Sumburgh, first-winter, 21st August (P. M. Ellis *et al.*). Fair Isle, first-winter, 27th September to 1st October, photo. (M. Ponsford, Dr R. Riddington, K. E. Vinicombe *et al.*); first-winter, 28th October to 1st November (J. M. Reid *et al.*).**1996 Cornwall** Porthgarra, ♀, 14th May (G. G. Gynn, J. Lawman, D. Lewis).**1996 Hampshire** Farlington Marshes, first-summer ♂, 6th July to 6th September, photo. (M. L. Hawkes, D. G. Hobern *et al.*).**1996 Northamptonshire** Pitsford Reservoir, age uncertain, 15th-18th November (M. R. Alibone *et al.*).**1996 Shetland** Foula, first-winter, 26th August (A. R. Mainwood).

(Northeast and East Russia, West Siberia, West and Central Asia; winters southern and Southwest Asia) Another good year with, as is becoming increasingly the norm, appearances in spring as well as the more usual scatter of records. Scilly in early autumn retains its current reliability for the species. In the Channel Islands, a juvenile was at La Claire Mare, Guernsey, on 19th August.

Cedar Waxwing *Bombycilla cedrorum* (0, 2, 0)

(North America; winters south to northern South America) The record of one on Noss, Shetland, on 25th-26th June 1985, originally placed in Category D (*Brit. Birds* 86: 538), is now regarded as having related to a genuine vagrant and therefore precedes the Nottinghamshire bird of 20th February to 18th March 1996 (*Brit. Birds* 90: 495) as the first record for Britain & Ireland (*Ibis* 140: 182).

Alpine Accentor *Prinella collaris* (29, 10, 1)**Pembrokeshire** Strumble Head, 30th October, photo. (S. & Mrs S. Davies).

(Mountains in Iberia and Northwest Africa, and the Alps east to Japan; winters in lower valleys) With five records in the 1970s, none in the 1980s and now a further five in the 1990s, this species remains as rare and

unpredictable as ever, though this record does echo the occurrences in Scilly on 30th October to 9th November 1977 (*Brit. Birds* 71: 515) and in Cornwall on 4th November 1990 (*Brit. Birds* 84: 482).

Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia* (2, 120, 6)

Cleveland Hartlepool Headland, in song, 18th-19th May, photo. (R. C. Taylor *et al.*) (plate 134).

Shetland Fair Isle, three: adult, 24th-30th May, trapped 29th (I. A. Dillon, Dr R. Riddington *et al.*); first-summer, 7th-10th June, trapped 7th, photo. (Dr R. Riddington *et al.*); probable first-summer, trapped, 26th (Dr R. Riddington, Mrs P. Thompson *et al.*).

Suffolk Hollesley, in song, 26th May to 1st June, sound-recorded (P. R. Catchpole, S. H. Piotrowski, R. West *et al.*). Landguard, 28th-29th September (S. Babbs, J. Dixon, S. J. Ling *et al.*).

(Scandinavia, East Europe and West Asia; winters Africa) Very much an average showing by recent standards, with some entirely typical dates and locations.

Rufous Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*

L. m. africana/hafizi (0, 2, 0)

1991 Yorkshire, East Spurn, 6th-14th October, trapped 6th, photo. (J. Cudworth, B. R. Spence *et al.*).

(East from southern Russia and Afghanistan) The only previous documented and accepted record relates to one found dead on Fair Isle, Shetland, on 30th October 1971 (*Brit. Birds* 65: 341; 73: 519). The Spurn bird, by virtue of the strength of its supercilium and its biometrics, showed characters closer to *hafizi*.

Siberian Rubythroat *Luscinia calliope* (0, 1, 1)

Dorset Osmington Mills, first-winter ♂, 19th October, photo. (I. R. Hunt *et al.*) (plate 135).

(Siberia; winters India to Southeast Asia and Philippines) For many, probably the bird of the year, coming 22 years after the first, on Fair Isle, Shetland, in October 1975 (*Brit. Birds* 69: 346; 71: 516; 72: 89-94), though hot on the heels of more recent appetite-whetters on the Continent. The coincidence of date with the next species is noteworthy. There must be hope that the wait for the next one will not be so long.

Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus* (3, 13, 1)

Leicestershire Near Loughborough, first-winter, trapped 19th October, photo. (observers' names withheld) (plate 136).

(Northeast Europe across Asia to Japan; winters Southeast Asia) A superb mist-net find of this delightful but retiring species, entirely typical in date, but the first inland record and a quality addition to the Leicestershire list. The observers did want to release the news at the time, but the landowner on whose property the ringing site is located apologetically declined permission.

Common Stonechat *Saxicola torquata*

S. t. maura/stejnegeri (1, 254, 5)

Caernarfonshire Bardsey, ♀ or first-winter, 29th October (A. F. Silcocks).

Norfolk Blakeney Point, first-summer ♂, 21st-23rd May (S. C. Joyner, A. M. Stoddart).

Pembrokeshire Strumble Head, ♀ or first-winter, 6th October (C. Benson, G. H. Rees).

Shetland Fair Isle, ♀ or first-winter, 6th November (Dr R. Riddington *et al.*). Fetlar, ♂, age uncertain, 8th-9th November (J. & T. G. Davies, D. Suddaby).

1993 Yorkshire, North Whitby, ♂, 10th-13th May, photo. (T. J. Barker, R. S. Slack, A. White *et al.*).

1995 Shetland Haroldswick, Unst, ♀ or first-winter, 21st September (G. H., W. F. & W. R. H. Peplow). Norwick, Unst, ♀, 2nd to at least 3rd October (*Brit. Birds* 89: 515), was ♂.

1996 Norfolk Holme, ♂, 18th May, photo. (Dr I. Burrows, P. Lambley *et al.*). Ongar Hill, ♀ or first-winter, 18th September (P. M. Wilson).

(White Sea, eastwards across Siberia; winters Iran, Southeast Asia and Borneo) Another extremely poor year, in contrast to the high numbers of the late 1980s and early 1990s. The proportion of spring records continues to climb, with May records on the East Coast emerging as a clear pattern. A female or first-winter on St Martin's, Guernsey, Channel Islands, on 12th October (*Brit. Birds* 90: 496) was actually in 1995, not 1996 as stated.

Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina* (1, 11, 2)

Caernarfonshire Bardsey, first-winter, 20th-21st September, photo. (A. F. Silcocks *et al.*).

Pembrokeshire Skokholm, first-winter, 24th-26th September, photo. (D. J. Astins, T. J. Price, G. Thompson *et al.*).

1996 Kent Church Hougham and Abbotcliffe, 6th October, photo. (J. A. Gibson, I. A. Roberts *et al.*).

(South and Central Eurasia from Russia and Turkey eastwards; winters Northeast and East Africa and from Arabia eastwards to Central India) Initially, there was some speculation as to whether the two Welsh records involved the same bird moving south, but the Skokholm individual had a complete set of replaced tertials whereas that on Bardsey did not.

Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka* (3, 32, 4)

Lancashire Seaforth, ♂, 27th October, photo. (C. Sharratt, S. J. White *et al.*) (plate 137).

Norfolk Sheringham, ♀, 20th October (K. B. Shepherd *et al.*).

Northumberland Seahouses, ♂, 29th October (J. Brown, A. Upton *et al.*).

Yorkshire, East Kilnsea, ♀, 21st-28th October; same, Spurn, 24th-25th, photo. (M. Askew, K. Gillon, L. Sollitt *et al.*) (plate 138).

(Southeast Europe and South-central Asia; winters East Africa) A distinct late-October influx. The Lancashire individual was only the second to penetrate to the West Coast (though three have occurred in Ireland).

Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe hispanica* (15, 39, 2)

Scilly St Agnes, ♂, *O. h. hispanica*, 5th-6th May, photo. (J. W. Hale, M. S. Scott, N. E. Wall, N. C. Ward *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, first-summer ♂, *O. h. melanoleuca*, 17th July to 8th September (N. J. Riddiford, Dr R. Riddington, J. Watt *et al.*).

(Southern Europe, Northwest Africa and Southwest Asia, also Iran; winters West Africa) This species continues to resist attempts to define neat and predictable patterns of occurrence. The Shetland bird, which was remarkably elusive during periods of its prolonged stay, was only the second ever July arrival, the first having been in Caithness in 1969 (*Brit. Birds* 63: 284). Recent taxonomic interest in separating the *hispanica* and *melanoleuca* forms will doubtless lead to particularly close scrutiny of future individuals.

Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti* (11, 43, 17)

Avon Near Clevedon, ♂, 19th November, photo. (R. Hunt, J. J. Packer *et al.*).

Cornwall Loe Bar, ♀, 28th November to 3rd December (S. Bury, R. Kemp *et al.*). Hannafore, ♂, 3rd-12th December (R. M. Belringer *et al.*).

Devon Beesands, ♂, 25th-26th October, photo. (G. & L. Carr *et al.*). Prawle Point, ♂, 29th-30th November (I. W. Lakin, J. C. Nicholls *et al.*).

Dorset Studland Heath, first-winter ♂, 5th-6th March, photo. (P. Chandler, S. J. Morrison *et al.*).

Gloucestershire Bishop's Cleeve, ♂, 10th December (P. H. Dymott, J. D. Sanders, T. Wright).

Kent Dungeness, ♂, 16th-17th October, photo. (R. Fowling *et al.*). Reculver, ♂, 8th-10th November, photo. (P. Bearat, D. C. Gilbert, C. Hindle *et al.*).

Lothian Thorntonloch area, ♀, 9th-13th November, photo. (K. Gillon, C. Scott *et al.*). Musselburgh, ♀, 1st December to 4th January 1998, photo. (A. Robinson *et al.*) (plate 139).

Norfolk Snettisham, ♀, 7th-12th December, photo. (R. L. Harris, S. Taylor *et al.*).

Northeast Scotland Girdleness, ♂, 7th November (H. I. Scott *et al.*).

Northumberland Holy Island, ♂, 20th, 30th November (G. Moody per P. R. Davey). Bamburgh, ♂, 10th-15th December, photo. (S. Bloomfield *et al.*) (plate 140).

Pembrokeshire Skokholm, ♀, 12th December (T. Purcell, G. Thompson).

Sussex, East Beachy Head, ♂, 30th November to 5th December, photo. (D. Cooper *et al.*).

(North Africa, Northwest Arabia, east to Mongolia; winters Sahara, Arabia and Pakistan) An astonishing record influx, easily beating the five in 1994, in a phenomenon which was not confined to Britain. Its cause, however, may forever remain a mystery. The majority of the males were submitted as first-winters. Although this may well have been correct, it has to be remembered that adults undergo a complete post-breeding moult, as a result of which ear-coverts, chin and throat show pale fringes and are not readily distinguishable from those of first-winter plumage.

White's Thrush *Zoothera dauma* (29, 19, 1)

Shetland Foula, 29th September (A. R. Mainwood, J. Vaughan).

(Northern and central Siberia; winters southern India and Southeast Asia) After a gap of three years, a return visit by this beautiful forest thrush. The late-September date and the remote location continue the recent pattern, though the older records exhibit a wider range of dates and venues.

Dusky Thrush *Turdus naumanni* (1, 8, 1)

Greater London South Woodford, first-winter, *T. n. naumanni*, 6th-11th January (Dr C. D. & Dr K. M. Whitfield) (fig. 7, on page 504).

(Northern and Central Siberia) Consorting with Redwings *T. iliacus* on an area of rough ground and, remarkably, only a few kilometres from the famous Woodford Green individual of 19th January to 9th March 1990 (*Brit. Birds* 83: 323). Although it went to a recirculation, the Committee finally concluded that there could be no doubt that the identification was correct. It is now ten years since the last individual of the race *eunomus* occurred in Britain.

Dark-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis* (3, 37, 3)

Derbyshire Hollingwood, first-winter ♂, *T. r. atrogularis*, 3rd January to 24th February, photo. (B. Hill *et al.*) (plate 141).

Shetland Fetlar, first-winter ♀, *T. r. atrogularis*, 8th October (S. Croft, T. G. & J. Davies, D. Suddaby *et al.*). Bressay, first-winter ♀, *T. r. atrogularis*, 10th October, photo. (P. Goddard).

(Central Asia; winters northern India and China) Further examples of what has become a clear recent pattern: autumn arrival, largely in the Northern Isles, followed by suburban wintering.

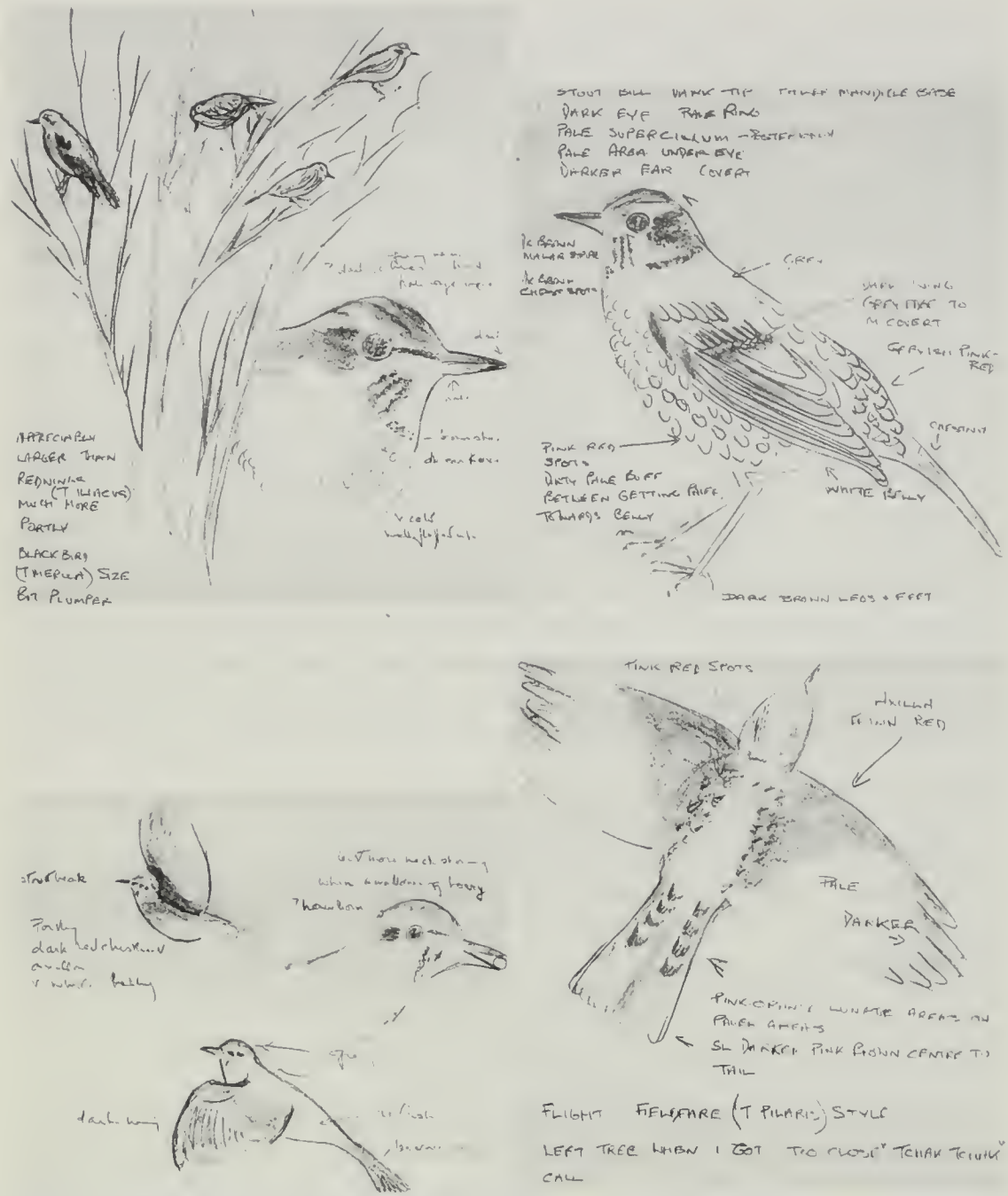


Fig. 7. Dusky Thrush *Turdus naumanni* of nominate race, Greater London, January 1997 (C. D. Whitfield). See page 503.

Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella certhiola* (3, 14, 4)
Shetland Fair Isle, first-winter, trapped 24th September, photo. (J. M. Reid, Dr R. Riddington *et al.*); 14th October (J. M. Reid, Dr R. Riddington, S. C. Votier). Sumburgh, 27th September, photo. (P. M. Ellis, S. Reeves *et al.*). Kergord, first-winter, 28th-30th September, trapped 28th, photo. (P. V. Harvey, K. Osborn, P. Sclater *et al.*).
1996 Shetland Fair Isle, juvenile or first-winter, trapped 17th September (*Brit. Birds* 90: 498), was not trapped.
 (Western Siberia and Central Asia to Japan; winters India and Southeast Asia) Four in a year is the best ever, but Shetland retains its grip on what is still a major rarity.

Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata* (9, 61, 4)

Caernarfonshire Bardsey, first-winter, trapped 27th September (P. Durnell, P. Potts, A. F. Silcocks).

Shetland Fair Isle, 26th September (J. M. Reid *et al.*); another, 27th, photo. (J. F. McConnell *et al.*).

Suffolk Landguard, trapped 26th September (A. D. Mitchell *et al.*).

(East Eurasia from Central Russia to northern Japan; winters Philippines and Southeast Asia) The Northern Isles monopoly on this species seems to be well and truly breaking down, with a remarkable third occurrence for Bardsey and the third for East Anglia. Fair Isle does, however, retain its status as the prime locality. The almost simultaneous arrival of these individuals is noteworthy; how many more were there between these widely separate locations?

River Warbler *Locustella fluviatilis* (0, 26, 1)

Buckinghamshire Linford Gravel-pits, in song, 15th-16th June (R. D. Andrews, A. V. Harding, J. R. Wallington *et al.*).

1996 Northumberland Big Waters Country Park, in song, 2nd August (I. Fisher, A. H. Johnstone *et al.*).

(Central and eastern Europe and West-central Asia; winters southeastern Africa) The additional 1996 record could just possibly have related to the same individual as that present near Bellingham, Northumberland, on 16th-30th June (*Brit. Birds* 90: 499). In this case, however, the bird was not actually seen, although the description of the song was entirely convincing.

Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola* (47, 1078, -)

1969 Somerset Locality withheld, trapped 14th August (*Brit. Birds* 63: 285), was at Steart.

1975 Sussex, East Locality withheld, nine juveniles trapped: three 10th August, two 11th, two 17th, another 18th, another 4th-5th October (*Brit. Birds* 69: 348; 72: 536; 88: 538), all were at Filsham.

(Germany eastwards to European Russia, including northern Italy and Hungary; winters Africa south of the Sahara) This species is no longer considered by the Committee, but the statistics for pre-1958 and 1958-96 are up to date.

Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola* (2, 38, 5)

Berkshire Thatcham, trapped 7th September, photo. (J. Legg, D. Long, I. Weston *et al.*).

Orkney North Ronaldsay, first-winter, trapped 26th October (S. D. Stansfield *et al.*).

Scilly St Mary's, 9th-11th June (M. S. Scott *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, 21st-23rd September, photo. (Dr R. Riddington, R. I. Thorpe, J. Young *et al.*); first-winter, 28th September to 3rd October, trapped 28th, photo. (Dr R. Riddington *et al.*).

1994 Shetland Fair Isle, adult, 22nd-26th September, trapped 22nd (*Brit. Birds* 88: 538), now considered first-winter (Dr R. Riddington).

(Southern Russia and Asia; winters Southwest Asia and India) The year 1997 continues the recent increased prominence of this species. For example, it was unrecorded on the Northern Isles in autumn prior to 1986, since when it has occurred there 14 times. The Berkshire individual echoes a previous inland occurrence, in Hertfordshire on 9th November 1981 (*Brit. Birds* 75: 519).

Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* (23, 171, 3)

Angus & Dundee Loch of Kinnordy, intermittently in song, 30th May to 30th June, possibly to 24th July, photo. (A. Wight *et al.*).

Nottinghamshire Netherfield Gravel-pits, in song, 12th-29th June, photo. (M. C. Dennis, P. Smith *et al.*) (plate 142).

Scilly St Mary's, in song, 19th-23rd May, photo. (J. P. Siddle *et al.*).

1969 Somerset Locality withheld, trapped 25th August (*Brit. Birds* 63: 285), was at Combwich.

1980 Sussex, East Locality withheld, ♂, 15th August (*Brit. Birds* 81: 582), was at Filsham.

(Europe, Southwest and East Asia and North Africa; winters Africa) The lowest turn-out for six years by this noisy late-spring songster.

Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata* (1, 69, 0)

1996 Kent St Margaret's, 12th November (I. P. Hodgson).

1996 Sussex, East Icklesham, first-winter, trapped 30th September, photo. (S. J. R. Rumsey, J. Willsher *et al.*).

(Northwest Russia east to Mongolia and south to Iran; winters India) The first completely blank year since 1986.

Spectacled Warbler *Sylvia conspicillata* (0, 1, 1)

Suffolk Landguard, ♂, 20th April to 2nd May, trapped 26th April, photo. (M. C. Marsh *et al.*) (plate 147).

(Southwest Europe, Middle East, North Africa, Madeira, Canary and Cape Verde Islands; winters Northern Sahara and Northwest Africa) After a long and chequered history of attempted entry to the British List, the first fully authenticated record was at Filey, North Yorkshire, on 24th-29th May 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 87: 554). Though initially elusive, this second individual proved later to be more accommodating and doubtless points the way to more records in the future.

Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans* (12, 386, 15)

Angus & Dundee Barry Buddon, Monifieth, ♂, 16th-18th May (C. D. Dyson *et al.*).

Caernarfonshire Bardsey, first-summer ♀, 14th-18th May, trapped 17th, photo. (C. J. Dunn, D. Moss, A. F. Silcocks *et al.*); first-summer ♂, 15th May, presumed same trapped 29th, photo. (C. J. Dunn, K. Goodrich, A. F. Silcocks *et al.*).

Dorset Portland Bill, ♂, 25th May (G. Morley, G. Walbridge *et al.*).

Highland Loth, near Helmsdale, ♂, 25th June (A. W. Lauder).

Norfolk Blakeney Point, ♀, 17th May, photo. (J. V. Bhalerao, G. E. Dunmore, M. I. Eldridge *et al.*).

Northumberland Tynemouth, in song, 3rd May (A. S. Jack).

Shetland Fair Isle, three: ♂, 10th May (Dr R. Riddington, S. Thomson *et al.*); ♀, 16th May (A. Bull, Dr R. Riddington *et al.*); age/sex uncertain, 28th-29th May (I. A. Dillon, Dr R. Riddington *et al.*). Bressay, ♂, 9th May (P. Goddard, J. Mitchell, A. Wheeler). Foula, ♂, age uncertain, 17th-27th May (A. R. Mainwood); ♂, probably first-summer, 25th May to 9th June, dead 11th, photo. (A. R. Mainwood *et al.*).

Sussex, East Beachy Head, in song, 24th-25th May (C. F. Ball, K. Murray *et al.*).

Yorkshire, East Beacon Ponds, Kilnsea, ♀, 19th May (K. Gillon).

1993 Dorset Portland, ♂, 9th April (J. Dunn).

1996 Scilly St Agnes, ♂, 30th March to 22nd April (J. & Mrs P. Hale, W. H. Wagstaff *et al.*).

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1992 Wexford Hook Head, first-summer ♀, 17th May (*Irish Birds* 6: 85).

1996 Wexford Great Saltee, ♀, 20th-21st April; another ♀, 21st April (*Irish Birds* 6: 85).

(South Europe, West Turkey and Northwest Africa; winters northern and West Africa) A rather standard set of records of one of Britain's commonest rarities.

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides* (13, 294, 17)**Borders** St Abb's Head, 30th August to 2nd September (M. Culshaw *et al.*).**Caernarfonshire** Bardsey, 14th-15th June, trapped 15th, photo. (C. J. Dunn, P. R. Massey, A. F. Silcocks); 31st August (A. F. Silcocks).**Cumbria** South Walney, trapped 15th June, photo. (W. Makin, C. Raven *et al.*).**Northeast Scotland** Near Johnshaven, 31st August to 2nd September (P. A. A. Baxter *et al.*).**Orkney** Stronsay, 7th June, photo. (J. F. & Mrs S. M. Holloway, M. & Mrs L. Johnson).**Pembrokeshire** Skokholm, 23rd June (G. V. F. Thompson *et al.*).**Shetland** Quendale, 23rd-24th August, photo. (P. M. Ellis, A. Fitchett *et al.*) (plate 145).

Tresta, 24th August (P. M. Ellis, J. D. Okill). Kergord, 24th August (J. D. Okill). Out

Skerries, 26th August, photo.; first-winter, trapped 28th August, photo.; another first-winter,

trapped 29th, photo. (J. F. & Mrs D. R. Cooper, E. Tait). Fetlar, 28th August (P. M. Ellis,

Dr I. R. Hartley, D. Suddaby *et al.*). Fair Isle, first-winter, 31st August, presumed same,

trapped 1st September, photo. (M. A. Newell, J. M. Reid, Dr R. Riddington); another individual, 1st September (J. M. Reid, Dr R. Riddington).

Suffolk Landguard, in song, trapped 8th July, photo. (M. C. Marsh, N. Odin *et al.*).**1996 Durham** South Shields, 7th-8th September (R. Ahmed *et al.*).**1996 Leicestershire** Coalville, 17th September (M. J. Jarvis). Priory Water, 13th October (D. J. S. Gamble).

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1996 Dublin Rockabill, 3rd June (*Irish Birds* 6: 85).**1996 Wexford** Murrinctown, first-winter, 14th-17th September (*Irish Birds* 6: 85).

(Eurasia east from northern Germany; winters Pakistan, India and Indochina)

Further reinforcement of the pattern of June occurrences around the Irish Sea.

July records are, however, far less frequent. The August influx was typical,

though this year almost exclusively a Shetland phenomenon. The 1996

acceptances from Leicestershire are further demonstration that scarce passerines

can occur inland: the only difficulty lies in finding them. In the Channel Islands,

one was in song at Torteval, Guernsey, on 11th-12th June 1996.

Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis* (19, 209, 3)**Shetland** Out Skerries, 22nd August (J. F. & Mrs D. R. Cooper). Fetlar, 1st September (J. & T. G. Davies).**Yorkshire, North** Whitby, 19th-20th October (T. J. Barker, R. S. Slack, A. White).**1996 Suffolk** Corton, 16th-18th October (*Brit. Birds* 90: 502), was 16th-18th September.

(Northern Fennoscandia, east to Alaska; winters Southeast Asia) An

extremely poor showing and the worst since two in 1990, though the August

individual, on a date more usually associated with the previous species, is the

earliest since 1981.

Hume's Warbler *Phylloscopus humei* (0, 24, 3)**Kent** Littlestone, 25th November (D. Walker *et al.*).**Norfolk** Holme, 22nd October, photo. (J. Bishop, G. F. Hibberd *et al.*).**Sussex, East** Sheepcote Valley, Brighton, 16th-22nd November, photo., sound-recorded (J. F. Cooper, R. J. Fairbank, I. J. Whitcombe *et al.*) (plate 144).**1966 Sussex, East** Beachy Head, 13th-17th November (P. Clement, A. Quinn, R. E. Scott *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 72: 124-126, 484-485).**1967 Norfolk** Cley, 2nd December to 7th January 1968, sound-recorded (K. Allsop, D. J. Holman, E. M. P. Stanford).**1968 Norfolk** See 1967 Norfolk above.**1970 Northumberland** Low Hauxley, trapped 7th November (J. A. Ginnever, T. Hallam, E. R. Meek) (*Brit. Birds* 71: 464-465).**1988 Leicestershire** Ashby-de-la-Zouch, 10th January to at least 18th February (M. S. Cavanagh, A. M. Stoddart *et al.*).

- 1989 **Norfolk** Winterton, 1st-8th December (P. Cawley, P. J. Heath, A. M. Stoddart).
- 1989 **Northumberland** Newbiggin-by-the-Sea, 18th-22nd November, photo. (A. S. Butler, J. McLoughlin, J. G. Steele).
- 1990 **Yorkshire, East** Aldbrough, 10th-14th November (P. I. Holt, A. Johnson, J. McLoughlin *et al.*).
- 1991 **Angus & Dundee** Auchmithie, 13th October, sound-recorded (G. Addison, C. Campbell, M. S. Scott *et al.*).
- 1991 **Devon** Efford Marsh, 10th-24th January (R. W. White).
- 1991 **Norfolk** Holkham Meals, 25th October to 1st November (A. I. Bloomfield *et al.*).
- 1991 **Yorkshire, East** Kilnsea, 29th October to 2nd November (A. J. Booth, J. McLoughlin).
- 1992 **Devon** Plymouth, 13th January to 10th March, sound-recorded (S. C. Madge, S. McMahon *et al.*).
- 1993 **Pembrokeshire** Strumble Head, 20th November (S. Berry).
- 1993 **Yorkshire, East** Flamborough Head, 5th-8th November, trapped 5th, photo. (P. A. Lassey *et al.*).
- 1994 **Cleveland** Hartlepool Headland, 11th November (B. Beck, C. Kehoe).
- 1994 **Dorset** Winspit, 26th November to 3rd December (G. Dutson, R. W. White *et al.*).
- 1994 **Fife** Isle of Isay, 10th November (A. Robinson).
- 1994 **Northeast Scotland** Bullers of Buchan, 10th-13th November (T. W. Marshall, A. Webb *et al.*).
- 1994 **Orkney** South Ronaldsay, 4th-6th November (M. Gray, E. R. Meek *et al.*).
- 1994 **Staffordshire** Westport Lake, at least 20th December (W. J. Low).
- 1994 **Yorkshire, East** Flamborough Head, 11th-15th November (J. C. Lamplough, J. McLoughlin *et al.*).
- 1995 **Norfolk** Great Yarmouth, 2nd January to 28th April, photo., sound-recorded (D. J. Holman, S. Smith *et al.*).
- 1995 **Yorkshire, East** Hornsea, 21st February to 16th March, sound-recorded (T. D. Charlton *et al.*).
- 1996 **Scilly** St Mary's, 4th-7th October, probably since 1st (W. E. Fletcher, M. S. Scott, J. P. Siddle *et al.*).

(From Sayan and Altai mountains south to the Northwest Himalayas; winters mainly in the Indian subcontinent from Pakistan to Bangladesh) A long-awaited and welcome recognition of this species' occurrence in Britain, though treated until recently as a race of Yellow-browed Warbler *P. inornatus*. With no records prior to 13th October, and the majority falling in November, its occurrence pattern differs markedly from that of its Siberian cousin and most closely mirrors that of Pallas's Warbler *P. proregulus* and Dusky Warbler *P. fuscatus*, though a greater propensity to attempted wintering is clear. Identification was dealt with recently by Steve Madge and David Quinn (*Brit. Birds* 90: 571-575), who stressed the importance of vocalisations.

Radde's Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi* (1, 164, 8)

- Cornwall** St Levan, 19th October (P. G. Akers, D. J. Chown *et al.*).
- Dorset** Portland Bill, first-winter, trapped 22nd October, photo. (M. Cade, Prof. P. J. & Mrs C. R. Morgan *et al.*).
- Norfolk** Holkham Meals, 22nd October, photo. (J. B. Kemp, E. J. Reed *et al.*).
- Northumberland** Low Hauxley, first-winter, 18th-23rd October, trapped 18th, photo. (D. Middleton *et al.*).
- Orkney** St Margaret's Hope, South Ronaldsay, first-winter, trapped 19th October (J. A. & Mrs R. McCutcheon *et al.*).
- Scilly** St Mary's, 14th October (R. L. Harris); presumed same, 19th (D. & Mrs J. Bridges *et al.*).
- Shetland** Fetlar, 10th-15th October (S. Croft, T. G. & J. Davies, D. Suddaby).
- Yorkshire, East** Spurn, 19th-20th October (K. Gillon *et al.*).

(Central and East Asia; winters Southeast Asia) A traditional line-up of dates and venues, with a wide geographical spread, and confirming the middle two weeks of October as the best bet for finding this species.

Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus* (1, 172, 16)

Devon Lannacombe Valley, trapped 23rd October, photo. (A. K. Searle).

Dorset Winspit, 23rd-24th November (S. J. Morrison, A. & C. Rogers, G. Walbridge *et al.*). Hengistbury Head, 30th November (S. Simmonds *et al.*).

Flintshire Point of Air, 11th-12th November (E. J. Abrahams, C. Rowley, R. I. Thorpe *et al.*).

Lothian Thorntonloch, 6th November (K. Gillon *et al.*).

Norfolk Holkham Meals, 20th-21st October (A. I. Bloomfield, J. R. McCallum *et al.*). Waxham, 23rd-25th October, photo. (K. K. Harrison, P. J. Heath, B. Jarvis).

Northumberland Farne Islands, 5th November (D. Munns, A. Upton *et al.*). Newbiggin-by-the-Sea, 18th-21st November (T. R. Cleeves, A. S. Jack *et al.*).

Scilly St Mary's, 22nd October (T. Francis, D. Page); 5th-6th November (J. P. Siddle *et al.*).

Shetland Out Skerries, 17th October (P. M. Ellis). Fetlar, 17th-19th October (S. Croft, D. Suddaby *et al.*). Fair Isle, 7th-8th November (Dr R. Riddington *et al.*).

Suffolk Corton, 23rd-24th October (C. A. Buttle *et al.*).

Yorkshire, East Spurn, trapped 28th September, photo.; same, Kilnsea, 5th October (L. J. Degan, D. Page, M. J. Pilsworth *et al.*).

(Central and northeastern to southern Asia; winters northern India and Southeast Asia) Another good showing by this increasingly frequent visitor, which is now starting to 'pull away' from the previous species. As usual, a high proportion of November records, though the Spurn individual reminds us that early birds can be looked for in late September. A fairly typical spread of locations, though the Flintshire bird is more noteworthy.

Radde's/Dusky Warbler *P. schwarzi/fuscatus* (2, 337, 24)

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1994 Wexford Great Saltee, 24th May (*Irish Birds* 6: 85).

(Ranges: see above)

Western Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus bonelli* (2, 49, 0)

(Central, western and southern Europe and Northwest Africa; winters in tropical West Africa) The 51 acceptable records of this newly defined species were listed recently (*Brit. Birds* 91: 122-123).

Eastern Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus orientalis* (0, 2, 0)

1987 Scilly St Mary's, 30th September, 8th-10th October, as Bonelli's Warbler *P. bonelli* (*Brit. Birds* 81: 585), now specifically reidentified as *P. orientalis* (*Ibis* 139: 197-201).

(Southeast Europe and Asia Minor; winters Sudan) This individual now represents the first accepted record, predating the one in Northumberland on 20th-29th September 1995 (*Brit. Birds* 90: 503). At the stroke of a taxonomist's pen, this becomes Britain's rarest *Phylloscopus*.

Western/Eastern Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus bonelli/orientalis* (3, 137, 2)

Scilly St Agnes, 15th May (N. E. Wall). St Mary's, 15th May, photo. (J. P. Siddle *et al.*), possibly same as St Agnes.

(Ranges: see above) In the Channel Islands, one was at Port Saumarez, Guernsey, on 23rd August.

Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis* (2, 17, 1)

Angus & Dundee Ethie Mains, first-summer ♂, 31st May to 1st June, photo. (S. R. Green *et al.*) (plate 146).

(Central and Southeast Europe and western Russia; winters Africa) This species retains its rarity and unpredictability, representing a magical find for anyone so fortunate.

Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus* (0, 115, 16)

Cornwall Hayle, ♂, 1st, 10th January (T. S. Hale, P. J. Vokes *et al.*); possibly present since 2nd December 1996.

Glamorgan Kenfig, sex/age uncertain, presumed since 11th November 1996 (*Brit. Birds* 90: 503) to at least 9th March (D. G. Carrington *et al.*).

Kent New Hythe, sex/age uncertain, 14th-17th March (A. Woodcock *et al.*). Dungeness, ♂ and one other, 26th-28th October (W. Attridge, O. Leyshon, N. E. Wall *et al.*); ♂ same as East Sussex; another ♂, 6th November to at least 19th February 1998, possibly to 14th March (P. G. Akers, R. J. Price *et al.*).

Norfolk Hickling, ♂ and three others, 20th December (A. J. Kane).

Scilly Tresco, juvenile, 28th October, photo. (G. Sellors *et al.*). St Mary's, age/sex uncertain, 7th-8th November (J. P. Siddle *et al.*).

Somerset Westhay Moor, ♂, ♀, 5th January to 8th March, photo. (T. Raven *et al.*). Berrow, ♂, ♀ and first-winter, 14th-21st December (Dr D. Murdoch, B. E. Slade).

Sussex, East Icklesham, first-winter ♂, trapped 25th October, photo. (T. Squire *et al.*); also in Kent, previously ringed Sweden.

1996 Cornwall See Cornwall above.

1996 Kent Singleton Lakes, Ashford, two ♂♂, 14th November (J. Brookes, M. Hall).

(Western Europe to Manchuria; mainly resident, occasionally dispersive or irruptive) An excellent showing by this long-mooted potential invader. The flock of four in Norfolk echoes the four at Titchfield Haven, Hampshire, on 4th November 1994 (*Brit. Birds* 88: 542).

Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* (1, 45, 4)

Devon Berry Head, first-winter, 19th-23rd October (J. Howes, S. J. Lees *et al.*).

Orkney North Ronaldsay, first-winter, trapped 30th November (S. D. Stansfield *et al.*).

Suffolk Boyton Marshes, first-winter, 23rd November, photo. (G. Lowe, M. R. Morley, E. W. Patrick *et al.*).

Yorkshire, East Spurn, first-winter, 23rd September, photo. (R. Bolton, M. J. Pilsworth *et al.*).

(South Asia to China; winters Northeast Africa) A typical wide autumn scatter of dates and localities. Given current taxonomic moves, these attractive shrikes are doubtless destined for ever-more-critical scrutiny, though only the tiny proportion of adults seems likely to offer the chance of real enlightenment.

Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor* (32, 123, 3)

Fife Isle of May, ♂, 1st-2nd June, trapped 2nd (K. Brockie, J. M. Wilson *et al.*).

Shetland Foula, sex uncertain, 28th May (P. Catry, J. R. & Mrs S. C. Gear, A. R. Mainwood).

Sussex, West Sidlesham, adult, 24th October, photo. (P. W. Bradbeer, S. J. Patton, I. J. Whitcombe *et al.*).

1996 Suffolk Walberswick, ♂, 25th May (D. Pearson, L. Townsend *et al.*).

(Southern and eastern Europe and Southwest Asia; winters East and South Africa) An average small scatter of records, including yet another autumn adult.

Southern Grey Shrike *Lanius meridionalis* (1, 13, 1)

Northamptonshire Long Buckby, first-winter, *L. m. pallidirostris*, 3rd-4th November, photo. (R. D. Gossage, N. Roberts, P. K. Spokes *et al.*).

1989 Yorkshire, North Bishop Monkton, probably first-winter, *L. m. pallidirostris*, 31st October to 1st November, photo. (P. K. Bowman, R. Evison, C. Slator *et al.* per BBRC).

(Iberia, southern France, northern Africa across the Middle East and Arabia eastwards to India and southern Asia; mainly sedentary, but southern Asian population winters south to Sudan, northern Ethiopia and Somalia) This migratory form, colloquially known as 'Steppe Grey Shrike', may well represent a distinct species. This inland occurrence follows the one at Swindon, Wiltshire, on 23rd-28th September 1993. The 1989 record was not submitted as relating to this species, but the photograph clearly shows it to be so (*Brit. Birds* 87: 560).

Rosy Starling *Sturnus roseus* (160, 319, 18)

Anglesey Rhosneigr, adult, 24th August (M. Davis, M. L. Hawkes *et al.*), present 20th-24th, photo. (plate 148).

Cornwall Lizard, adult, 17th July (Mrs A. M. Ball). Trevoze Head, juvenile, 20th September (S. M. Christophers). St Just, juvenile, 18th October (J. P. Chapple, G. Hobin).

Denbighshire Glan Conwy, juvenile, 22nd October, photo. (L. Brewin).

Essex The Naze, juvenile, 19th October (A. J. A. Dally).

Kent Dungeness, juvenile, 27th-28th September (M. C. Buckland, T. & Mrs K. Robertson *et al.*).

Lothian Aberlady, adult, 29th June (S. & Mrs K. Housden).

Norfolk Blakeney, juvenile, 20th-27th October, photo. (B. & Mrs A. Rumsey *et al.*). Beeston, adult, 15th November to 1998, photo. (S. Crowe, D. E. Nye *et al.*) (plate 149).

Northumberland Newbiggin-by-the-Sea, juvenile, 1st September (S. C. Votier).

Scilly St Agnes, juvenile, 14th-20th October, photo. (Dr I. H. Leach *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, adult, 7th-9th August (J. M. Reid *et al.*). Quendale, juvenile, 14th September (A. F. T. Fitchett); presumed same, 5th-8th October (G. J. Fitchett *et al.*). Fetlar, juvenile, 24th September (S. Croft, J. & T. G. Davies, D. Suddaby).

Sussex, West Pagham Harbour, juvenile, 31st December (T. J. Edwards).

Wight, Isle of Seaview, adult, 4th-9th June (M. & Mrs S. Newell).

Yorkshire, East Kilnsea and Spurn, juvenile, 27th-28th September (W. H. Priestley, A. Scutt, B. Wainwright *et al.*).

1990 Kent Foreness, juvenile, 10th September (*Brit. Birds* 86: 540), now considered acceptable (K. D. Lord).

1994 Perth & Kinross See 1995 Angus & Dundee below.

1995 Angus & Dundee Near Spittal of Glenshee, adult, 29th-30th June (*Brit. Birds* 90: 505), was in 1994; locality is in Perth & Kinross.

1996 Cornwall St Just, juvenile, 24th September to 21st October (J. Hawkey, M. P. Semmens *et al.*).

1996 Highland Dornoch, Sutherland, adult, 15th August (I. Dillon *et al.*), present 12th-21st.

IRELAND

1996 At sea Gas-platform off Kinsale, Co. Cork, adult, 9th-11th June.

1996 Cork Ballycotton, adult, 20th July to 5th September. Allihies, adult or first-year, 27th-28th July. Old Head of Kinsale, juvenile, 15th September. (*Irish Birds* 6: 86)

(Southeast Europe and Southwest Asia; winters India) Another excellent year, with an unusually strong autumn influx on the East Coast. With the correction to the details of the 1994 Perth & Kinross individual, that year, with 31, now holds the record. In the Channel Islands, two juveniles were at Chouet, Guernsey, on 4th-5th October 1997.

Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis* (0, 6, 0)

Cumbria Waterside, ♂, since 13th July 1996 (*Brit. Birds* 90: 505), throughout year.

(Iberia, Northwest Africa, Sardinia and the Balkans east to Southwest Asia; mainly resident) The remarkable long stay of this individual continues, though no hybrids with the local House Sparrows *P. domesticus* seem yet to have been produced.

Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus* (1, 109, 0)

IRELAND

1996 Cork Inch Strand, 5th October. Crookhaven, 6th-8th October. Cape Clear Island, 14th October. (*Irish Birds* 6: 86)

1996 Waterford Mine Head, 15th-24th October (*Irish Birds* 6: 86).

(North America; winters Cuba and northern South America) The 1996 total is now nine (cf. peaks of 13 in 1995 and 14 in 1985), in striking contrast to the total absence in 1997.

European Serin *Serinus serinus* (76, 1129, -)

1967 Dorset Locality withheld, pair bred successfully, May (*Brit. Birds* 61: 56, 87-88, 357; 64: 217), was in Swanage.

1969 Dorset Locality withheld, see original references for details (*Brit. Birds* 63: 290; 64: 217), was on Portland.

1978 Devon Locality withheld, see original references for details (*Brit. Birds* 72: 541; 73: 526; 74: 489), was at Thurlestone.

1981 Devon Localities withheld, see original references for details (*Brit. Birds* 75: 527; 76: 521), were at Budleigh Salterton and Starcross/Cockwood.

1982 Devon Locality withheld, see original references for details (*Brit. Birds* 75: 527; 76: 521), was at Starcross/Cockwood.

(West, central and southern Europe) This species is no longer considered by the Committee, but the statistics for pre-1958 and 1958-96 are up to date.

Arctic Redpoll *Carduelis hornemanni* (30, 709, 7)

Norfolk Holkham Meals, 11th January (J. R. Williamson *et al.*).

Orkney Rendall, first-winter, trapped 7th November (J. B. Ribbands *et al.*).

Shetland Skaw, Unst, 5th October (P. M. Ellis, P. V. Harvey, M. G. Pennington *et al.*).

Baltasound, Unst, 8th-23rd October (P. V. Harvey, M. J. MacLeod, M. G. Pennington *et al.*).

Lambaness, Unst, *C. h. hornemanni*, 10th October (P. V. Harvey, M. G. Pennington, S. C.

Votier). Foula, 16th October (A. R. Mainwood); 25th October (J. R. Gear, A. R. Mainwood).

1995 Cumbria Dalston, Carlisle, trapped 16th December, photo. (I. J. Armstrong, G. Horne).

1995 Norfolk Horsey, 5th November (J. Harris, J. Oates). Winterton, trapped 20th November, photo. (A. W. Bowles, K. Brett, D. Parsons).

1995 Staffordshire Near Newborough, 24th December; first-winter, 28th (D. I. M. Wallace).

1995 Yorkshire, North Hawkser, 11th November (*Brit. Birds* 90: 508), locality is Hawsker.

1995 Yorkshire, South Wath Ings, first-winter, 29th December (S. Exley, S. D. Stansfield *et al.*).

1996 Cheshire Thurstaston, 9th-10th January (*Brit. Birds* 90: 506), to 11th (C. J. & S. R. Williams); presumed same, 22nd (A. Butler, J. Clark).

1996 Lincolnshire Gibraltar Point, 14th-15th January (M. R. Briggs, K. M. Wilson).

1996 Outer Hebrides Stornoway, first-winter, 7th-14th January (R. D. Wemyss).

1996 Staffordshire Stepping Stones, Cannock Chase, adult, 16th-17th February (J. K. Higginson, P. D. Hyde, S. Turner *et al.*); another, 20th (P. French, J. Gullby, J. K. Higginson *et al.*); another, 7th-11th March (T. Hextel, J. K. Higginson *et al.*); first-winter, 8th March (P. D. Hyde).

(Circumpolar Arctic; spreads erratically south in winter) An abrupt return to normality following the near 'white-out' of 1995/96. Other than in influx

years, however, this remains a very rare bird, and high standards of documentation will continue to be required.

Two-barred Crossbill *Loxia leucoptera* (40, 78, 2)

Fife Isle of May, ♂, 8th-11th August, trapped 10th, photo. (I. M. Darling, F. D. Hamilton *et al.*) (plate 150).

Norfolk Thetford Forest, ♂, trapped 21st August, photo. (S. F. Moores *et al.*).

1990 Northumberland Harwood Forest, ♂, 24th December to 16th March 1991, photo. (M. Henry, M. J. Sharp *et al.*).

1991 Northumberland See 1990 Northumberland above.

(Northeast Europe, North-central Asia, northern North America and Hispaniola; winters south and west of breeding range) After a five-year absence, the occurrence of two in a year of a massive influx of Common Crossbills *L. curvirostra* is perhaps not surprising. There were much larger numbers in several nearby countries on the Continent (*Brit. Birds* 91: 252).

Blackpoll Warbler *Dendroica striata* (0, 35, 1)

Scilly Tresco, 12th October to 1st November, photo. (D. L. Acfield *et al.*) (plate 151).

(North America; winters northern South America) A typical record, though this species' appearances in Scilly are now less regular than previously.

Common Yellowthroat *Geothlypis trichas* (1, 4, 2)

Scilly St Mary's, first-winter ♂, 9th October to 2nd November, photo. (A. M. Bines, P. S. Read, I. R. Lewington *et al.*) (plate 152).

Shetland Baltasound, Unst, first-summer ♀, 16th-23rd May, trapped 17th, photo. (M. J. MacLeod, M. G. Pennington *et al.*).

(North America; winters south to West Indies and Panama) A striking echo of the double occurrence in 1984, when one was on Fetlar, Shetland, in June (*Brit. Birds* 78: 570, 582-583), followed by another on Bryher, Scilly, in October (*Brit. Birds* 78: 582; 79: 434-435).

Hooded Warbler *Wilsonia citrina* (0, 2, 0)

(North America; winters Mexico and Central America) An account of the second accepted British record, on St Kilda, Outer Hebrides (then Western Isles), on 10th September 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 530), has been published recently (*Scot. Birds* 19: 123).

Dark-eyed Junco *Junco hyemalis* (1, 19, 1)

Cheshire Vicar's Cross, Chester, probably first-winter, 15th December to 19th April 1998, photo. (P. & Mrs P. Gillam, P. R. Hale *et al.*).

(North America) The tenth British record to have occurred in a garden. A close watch on the bird-table is clearly in order.

Pine Bunting *Emberiza leucocephalos* (2, 34, 0)

IRELAND

1996 Dublin Swords, adult ♂, 3rd-10th March (*Irish Birds* 6: 48-49, 87).

(Urals, across Asia to Sakhalin; winters Middle East, India and China).

Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica* (34, 330, 11)

Borders St Abb's Head, ♀, 21st May (L. M. & R. J. Safford *et al.*).

Ceredigion Cors Caron, ♂, 11th November, video. (J. & Mrs W. Gale).

Devon Yelverton, 22nd-23rd March (A. W. G. John, J. F. Jones *et al.*).

Northumberland Holy Island, ♀, 17th May (R. Forster, M. J. Sharp).

Orkney North Ronaldsay, ♂, 10th June (S. D. Stansfield).

Scilly Tresco, 19th to at least 24th October (A. Butter *et al.*).

Shetland Fetlar, ♀, 21st May (J. & T. G. Davies, D. Suddaby). Fair Isle, probably ♀, 19th May (Dr R. Riddington); ♀, 24th-27th May (M. A. Newell *et al.*); 8th October (J. M. Reid).

1991 Meirionnydd Arthog Bog, 5th to at least 10th April (R. I. Thorpe *et al.*).

1996 Cornwall Nanjizal, 7th October (K. A. Wilson).

IRELAND

Antrim Rathlin Island, 19th-25th October.

(Northeast Europe across to North Asia; winters Turkestan to China and Japan) The Devon individual provides further reinforcement of an emerging pattern of early-spring occurrences, presumably of birds moving away from wintering sites elsewhere in Britain or Western Europe. The Co. Antrim record is the first for Northern Ireland.

Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla* (23, 626, -)

1986 Highland Locality withheld, near Inverness, ♂, 9th March to 26th April, possibly since 31st January (*Brit. Birds* 80: 567), was at Tarradale.

(Northeast Europe and northern Asia; winters Turkestan to India and Southeast Asia) This species is no longer considered by the Committee, but the statistics for pre-1958 and 1958-96 are up to date.

Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola* (10, 181, 6)

Shetland Fetlar, ♀ or first-winter, 22nd August (T. G. & J. Davies). Foula, ♀ or first-winter, 1st September, possibly same, 6th (A. R. Mainwood). Out Skerries, ♀ or first-winter, trapped 2nd September, photo. (J. F. & Mrs D. R. Cooper, E. Tait). Fair Isle, ♀ or first-winter, 20th-23rd September (A. A. Murray, J. J. Sweeney *et al.*); another, 28th (M. A. Newell, Dr R. Riddington *et al.*).

1996 Northumberland Farne Islands, ♀ or first-winter, 20th-23rd August (*Brit. Birds* 90: 551), correct observers were S. J. McElwee, M. S. Thomas *et al.*

(Northern Europe across northern Asia; winters India and Southeast Asia) Bucking the recent trend towards more widespread occurrences (*Brit. Birds* 90: 511, 517), the emphasis shifts back to the Northern Isles.

Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala* (9, 122, 6)

Dorset Weston, Portland, first-summer ♂, 3rd June (G. Walbridge).

Kent Capel Fleet, in song, 30th June to 6th July, photo. (D. Belshaw, C. Morris, J. A. Rowlands *et al.*).

Man, Isle of Ramsey, ♂, 12th April (Mr & Mrs Henderson, C. M. Sharpe).

Scilly St Agnes, ♂, 3rd-4th June, photo. (Mrs P. Hale, M. S. Scott *et al.*).

Shetland Bressay, ♂, 14th-24th June (J. Garden, P. Goddard, A. M. Wheeler). Fetlar, ♀, 21st-26th June (D. Suddaby *et al.*).

(Southeast Europe and Southwest Asia; winters India) A typical year in respect of number, dates and localities.

Red-headed/Black-headed Bunting *E. bruniceps/melanocephala* (-, -, -)

IRELAND

1992 Cork Cape Clear Island, first-year ♀, killed by Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*, 3rd-4th October (*Irish Birds* 6: 87).

(Southeast Europe and Asia)

Appendix 1. Category D species accepted (see *Ibis* 136: 253)

White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus* (not known, 16, 0)

1971 Surrey Staines Reservoirs, three adults, 18th September (*Brit. Birds* 90: 518), was 19th April; presumed link with Norfolk record now probably invalid.

(Balkan region; some winter Northeast Africa)

Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus ruber*

P. r. roseus (–, 8, 0)

Kent Cliffe, since 1996 (*Brit. Birds* 90: 518), intermittently throughout year.

1995 Essex Abberton Reservoir, 29th–30th July (*Brit. Birds* 89: 529), 6th August (M. L. Hawkes).

(Old World race *P. r. roseus* breeds Mediterranean area, Africa eastward to India)

Falcated Duck *Anas falcata* (0, 14, 0)

1994 Yorkshire, East Blacktoft Sands, ♂, 22nd May (A. Grieve *et al.*).

(Eastern Siberia; winters North India, Japan, Korea)

Daurian Starling *Sturnus sturninus* (0, 1, 1)

Northumberland Ponteland, ♂, 26th August to 5th September, photo. (J. Alder, D. R. Shannon, E. Slack).

(Central and East Asia; winters southern China to Indonesia). A far from uncommon species in the cage-bird trade.

Appendix 2. List of records not accepted

This list contains all current records not accepted after circulation to the Committee. It does not include (a) those withdrawn by the observer(s) without circulation, after discussion with the Hon. Secretary; (b) those which, even if circulated, were not attributed by the observer(s) to any definite species; (c) those mentioned in 'Recent reports' in this journal if full details were unobtainable; or (d) certain escapes.

In the vast majority of cases, the record was not accepted because we were not convinced that the identification was fully established; only in a very few cases were we satisfied that a mistake had been made.

1997 White-billed Diver Orcombe Point, Devon, 13th March; Applecross, Wester Ross, Highland, 20th October. **Madeira/Cape Verde Petrel** Eccles-on-Sea, Norfolk, 26th June; Flamborough Head, East Yorkshire, 3rd November. **Bulwer's Petrel** *Bulweria bulwerii* Eccles-on-Sea, Norfolk, 12th October. **Short-tailed Shearwater** *Puffinus tenuirostris* Flamborough Head, East Yorkshire, 27th July. **American Bittern** *Botaurus lentiginosus* Land's End, Cornwall, 10th October. **Great White Egret** Penclacwydd, Gower, 5th January; Yelland, Devon, 9th April; Dawlish Warren, Devon, 23rd October. **American Wigeon** Ashleworth Ham, Gloucestershire, 22nd February to 14th March; Stanwick Gravel-pits, Northamptonshire, 23rd February, 1st March; Boarhunt, Hampshire, 12th March; Exmouth, Devon, 26th October. **Canvasback** Eccleston Mere, Lancashire, 20th July. **Black Kite** Cove Bottom, Suffolk, 29th March; Hopton, Norfolk, 24th April; Aqualate Mere, Staffordshire, 3rd May; East Stratton, Hampshire, 4th May; Letwell, Nottinghamshire/South Yorkshire, 4th May; Cornwood, Devon, 16th May; Freshwater, Isle of Wight, 16th May; Kingsbridge, Devon, 17th May; Oatwoods, Staffordshire, 18th May; Norwich, Norfolk, 13th June; Christchurch, Dorset, 14th June; Woburn, Bedfordshire, 17th June; Plymouth, Devon, 27th June; Sculthorpe, Norfolk, 1st August; Latton, Wiltshire, 10th August; Stiffkey, Norfolk, 11th August; Manea, Cambridgeshire, 26th August. **Red-footed Falcon** Blakeney, Norfolk, 19th May; Cannop Valley, Gloucestershire, 29th May; Porthgwarra, Cornwall, 19th October. **Little Bustard** *Tetrax tetrax* Dartmoor, Devon, 10th March. **Black-winged Stilt** Trimley St Martin, Suffolk, 18th August. **Collared Pratincole** Willington Gravel-pits, Derbyshire, 26th April. **Pratincole** Llantwit Fardre, Glamorgan, 22nd August. **American Golden Plover** Musselburgh, Lothian, 6th September. **Pacific Golden Plover** Lynn Point, Norfolk, 21st August. **Semipalmated Sandpiper** Pagham Harbour, West Sussex, 8th–9th September. **Broad-billed Sandpiper**

Greatham Creek, Cleveland, 25th November. **Great Snipe** Fair Isle, Shetland, 14th September; 19th September; Trimmingham, Norfolk, 27th September; Flamborough Head, East Yorkshire, 6th November. **Dowitcher** Spurn, East Yorkshire, 28th August. **Lesser Yellowlegs** Yantlett, Kent, 2nd February; Doonfoot, Ayrshire, 12th August. **Wilson's Phalarope** Queen Mother Reservoir, Berkshire, 5th September. **Great Black-headed Gull** *Larus ichthyæetus* Cley, Norfolk, 27th April. **Laughing Gull** Turnberry Point, Ayrshire, 10th February. **Bonaparte's Gull** Gouthwaite Reservoir, North Yorkshire, 26th March; Cotswold Water Park, Gloucestershire, 29th March; Farnham Gravel-pits, North Yorkshire, 10th April; Woolston Eyes, Cheshire, 3rd May. **Island Gull** *L. g. kumlieni* Rainford, Lancashire, 2nd January; Seaforth, Lancashire, 6th May; Kenfig, Glamorgan, 28th December. **Gull-billed Tern** Towan Head, Cornwall, 26th June; Portland Bill, Dorset, 1st October. **Caspian Tern** Llandegfedd Reservoir, Gwent, 29th-30th July. **Forster's Tern** Stithians Reservoir, Cornwall, 11th September; Ervie, Orkney, 29th September to 3rd October. **Sooty Tern** Portland Bill, Dorset, 12th September. **White-winged Black Tern** Capheaton, Northumberland, 4th May; Tynninghame, Lothian, 31st May. **Alpine Swift** Pernwell, Cambridgeshire, 26th May; Bexhill-on-Sea, East Sussex, 26th May; Landulph Marsh, Cornwall, 1st June; Benenden, Kent, 12th August. **Little Swift** Colchester, Essex, 6th June. **Pallid Swift** Wigan, Greater Manchester, 2nd June; Wierton Hill, Kent, 8th November. **Red-rumped Swallow** Cuckmere Haven, East Sussex, 12th April; Spurn, East Yorkshire, 23rd May; Bexhill-on-Sea, East Sussex, 26th May; Hollywood, West Midlands, 20th July. **Olive-backed Pipit** Newburgh, Northeast Scotland, 7th May. **Red-throated Pipit** Trevoze Head, Cornwall, 26th September. **Citrine Wagtail** Loch of Strathbeg, Northeast Scotland, 1st September; Bossington Beach, Somerset, 30th-31st October. **Common Stonechat** *S. t. maura/stejnegeri* Kynance Cove, Cornwall, 22nd March; Isle of May, Fife, 25th May; Headon Warren, Isle of Wight, 19th October; Burnham Overy, Norfolk, 24th October. **Pied Wheatear** Sker, Glamorgan, 9th November. **Black-eared Wheatear** Towan Head, Cornwall, 14th August. **Desert Wheatear** Garlieston Bay, Dumfries & Galloway, 19th July. **Dark-throated Thrush** Essington, Staffordshire, 2nd January. **Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler** Trevoze Head, Cornwall, 4th October. **Paddyfield Warbler** Holland Haven, Essex, 25th October. **Subalpine Warbler** Calf of Man, 9th May. **Arctic Warbler** Ramsey Island, Pembrokeshire, 23rd September. **Dusky Warbler** Great Yarmouth, Norfolk, 22nd October. **Western Bonelli's Warbler** Sizewell, Suffolk, 24th October. **Nutcracker** *Nucifraga caryocatactes* Gunnislake, Cornwall, 22nd July. **Arctic Redpoll** St Kilda, Outer Hebrides, 29th April. **Black-headed Bunting** Maehynlleth, Montgomeryshire, 7th July.

1996 **Albatross** Winterton, Norfolk, 13th January. **Little Shearwater** Peterhead, Northeast Scotland, 24th July. **Night Heron** Brent Reservoir, Greater London, 5th April. **King Eider** Dawlish Warren, Devon, 22nd September. **Black Kite** Great Leighs, Essex, 19th May; Medmenham, Buckinghamshire, 22nd July; Carnon Downs, Cornwall, 20th August; St Agnes Head, Cornwall, 8th September; Eastleigh, Hampshire, 16th September. **Lesser Kestrel** *Falco naumanni* Holland Haven, Essex, 4th-5th October. **Red-footed Falcon** Donna Nook, Lincolnshire, 3rd July. **Little Crake** Tresco, Scilly, 11th October. **Baird's Sandpiper** Blithfield Reservoir, Staffordshire, 5th October. **Great Snipe** Loch of Spiggie, Shetland, 18th September; Blithfield Reservoir, Staffordshire, 9th October; Sandwich Bay, Kent, 8th November. **Marsh Sandpiper** Frodsham, Cheshire, 14th August. **White-winged Black Tern** Skomer, Pembrokeshire, 11th November. **Pallid Swift** Nanquidno, Cornwall, 19th August. **Red-rumped Swallow** Ramsey Island, Pembrokeshire, 17th May. **Blyth's Pipit** *Anthus godlewskii* St Mary's, Scilly, 6th-10th November. **Red-throated Pipit** Flamborough Head, East Yorkshire, 6th September; Burnham Norton, Norfolk, 26th September; Nanjizal, Cornwall, 10th October. **Subalpine Warbler** Nanjizal, Cornwall, 26th August. **Greenish Warbler** Flamborough Head, East Yorkshire, 21st September. **Penduline Tit** Radipole, Dorset, 21st July; Nene Washes, Cambridgeshire, 10th October. **Arctic Redpoll** Ecclestone Mere, Lancashire, 4th-30th January; The Bell, Borders, 21st January; Cannock Chase, Staffordshire, 1st, 7th, 24th March; Thorpe Marsh, South Yorkshire, 14th November. **Yellow-breasted Bunting** Warham Greens, Norfolk, 21st September.

1995 **Sociable Lapwing** *Vanellus gregarius* Frolesworth, Leicestershire, 23rd October. **Least Sandpiper** *Calidris minutilla* Frodsham, Cheshire, 12th September. **Audouin's Gull** *Larus audouinii* Off St Catherine's Point, Isle of Wight, 14th August. **Lesser Crested Tern** Bexhill-on-Sea, East Sussex, 8th August. **Red-headed Woodpecker** *Melanerpes erythrocephalus*

Swansea, Gower, 21st November. **Middle Spotted Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos medius* St Margaret's Bay, Kent, 19th August. **Black-eared Wheatear** Fair Isle, Shetland, 14th September; Trimley, Suffolk, 25th October. **Greenish Warbler** Canvey Point, Essex, 19th September; Whitburn, Durham, 29th September. **Rosy Starling** Oakwood, Derbyshire, 25th November. **Arctic Redpoll** North Stow, Suffolk, 9th November; Blythburgh, Suffolk, 19th November. **Yellow-breasted Bunting** North Ronaldsay, Orkney, 6th September.

1994 Black Kite Frampton Fen/Skegness area, Lincolnshire, 2nd-6th May. **Pratincole** Wrangle, Lincolnshire, 14th June. **Black Woodpecker** *Dryocopus martius* Benacre, Suffolk, 13th March. **Alpine Swift** Scarborough, North Yorkshire, 4th May. **Dark-throated Thrush** *T. r. ruficollis* Great Yarmouth, Norfolk, 18th October.

1993 Black Kite Oakthorpe, Leicestershire, 30th September. **Red-footed Falcon** Pulborough Brooks, West Sussex, 22nd June. **South Polar Skua** *Catharacta maccormicki* Newbiggin-by-the-Sea, Northumberland, 5th September. **Rustic Bunting** Gibraltar Point, Lincolnshire, 25th September.

1990 Citrine Wagtail Sandwich Bay, Kent, 8th-10th May.

1986 South Polar Skua Cley, Norfolk, 6th September.

1982 South Polar Skua St Ives, Cornwall, 14th October.

1980 Hume's Warbler Sandwich Bay, Kent, 11th November.

1974 Hume's Warbler Wells, Norfolk, 24th October.

Appendix 3. List of records not accepted, but identification proved

This list provides a permanent record of those occurrences which, usually on the grounds of likely escape from captivity, find no place in any category, but which may, at some future date, merit further consideration. It does not include (a) any record of a species for which natural vagrancy is wholly unlikely, or (b) those records of presumed escapes already mentioned in the main text of this or earlier Reports.

Fulvous Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna bicolor* Ditchford and Stanwick Gravel-pits, Northamptonshire, four, 1st October 1997. **Hooded Merganser** *Lophodytes cucullatus* Barmstone, Hoveringham and Gunthorpe, Nottinghamshire, ♀ or first-winter, 16th November 1996 to 1997 (*Brit. Birds* 90: 521), to 18th February; same, Grantham Canal, Vale of Belvoir, Leicestershire, 22nd May. **Spur-winged Lapwing** *Hoplopterus spinosus* Stodmarsh, Kent, 30th April, 3rd-9th June 1997; same, Pett Level, East Sussex, 13th-14th June; same, Dungeness, Kent, 15th June to 10th January 1998 (plate 124). **Pallas's Rosefinch** *Carpodacus roseus* Pateley Bridge, North Yorkshire, 2nd-6th June 1994; Vane Farm, Perth & Kinross, 28th-30th April 1997.

Appendix 4. List of records remaining under consideration

This list is not intended to be complete. Some decisions may have been arrived at and notified to County Recorders/observers prior to the publication of this Report.

1997 Black Kite Burnham Norton, Norfolk, 29th-31st May. **Laughing Gull** Houghton Green, Cheshire, 12th January. **Red-throated Pipit** St Mary's, Scilly, 10th October; Porthgwarra, Cornwall, 22nd-23rd October. **Radde's Warbler** St Agnes, Scilly, 18th-19th October. **Two-barred Crossbill** Kergord, Shetland, 6th July. **Trumpeter Finch** Whitby, North Yorkshire, 27th May. **Pine Grosbeak** Moreton, Cheshire, 26th April. **Yellow-breasted Bunting** Fife Ness, Fife, 15th October.

1996 Madeira/Cape Verde Petrel Pendeen, Cornwall, 24th August. **American Golden Plover** Witham Mouth, Lincolnshire, 10th March. **Greenish Warbler** Prawle Point, Devon, 24th September.

1995 American Wigeon Leighton Moss, Lancashire, 6th-16th October. **Semipalmated Sandpiper** South Huish, Devon, 8th-9th October. **Black-eared Wheatear** Great Orme's Head, Caernarfonshire, 20th October. **Hume's Warbler** Spurn, East Yorkshire, 3rd November.

1994 Black-headed Bunting Skomer, Pembrokeshire, 9th May.

1993 South Polar Skua Sea area Sole, 26th August. **Hume's Warbler** Bridlington, East Yorkshire, 11th February.

1985 Collared Flycatcher Holkham Meals, Norfolk, 12th-13th May.



NEWS AND COMMENT

Compiled by Wendy Dickson and Bob Scott

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

Imataca Forest Reserve needs your help

You do not have to be a South American birder to know the value of South American forests for their amazing diversity of wildlife. You are probably aware of the fantastic birding in Venezuela, one of the richest avifaunas in the Neotropics, with over 1,300 species of resident and migratory birds. Approximately 46 of these species are endemic to the country.

In the east of Venezuela, south of the Orinoco Delta and nestling against the border with Guyana, is the Imataca Forest Reserve. The area is not particularly well known to birders, and like much of South America no doubt contains much to be discovered. Unfortunately, beneath the reserve lies considerable mineral wealth, including over 10,000 metric tons of gold. The remoteness of the region is demonstrated by the fact that it is home to five tribes of indigenous peoples. The fact that Imataca is a Forest Reserve and Protected Area meant that full-scale mining could not take place, although during the 1980s the area had been invaded by thousands of illegal miners whose smuggling activities destroyed some 10% of the area, which totals approximately 3.6 million hectares. The big mining companies' response has been simple: they have pressured the Venezuelan government to change the law. On 14th May 1997, the Government put a management plan into action that distributed most of Imataca amongst several multi-national mining and logging corporations and subsequently issued Presidential Decree 1850, which passed the plan into law.

In November 1997, in response to cases placed before it, Venezuela's Supreme Court announced an investigation into the legality of Decree 1850 and suspended the issuing of mining concessions. There is now a need for voices throughout the World to be heard in support for the overturning of Decree 1850. Your voice is needed. Further details of how you can help can be obtained from Earth Action, 17 The Green, Wye, Kent TN25 5AJ; tel: 01233-813796.

New conservation supremo for RSPB

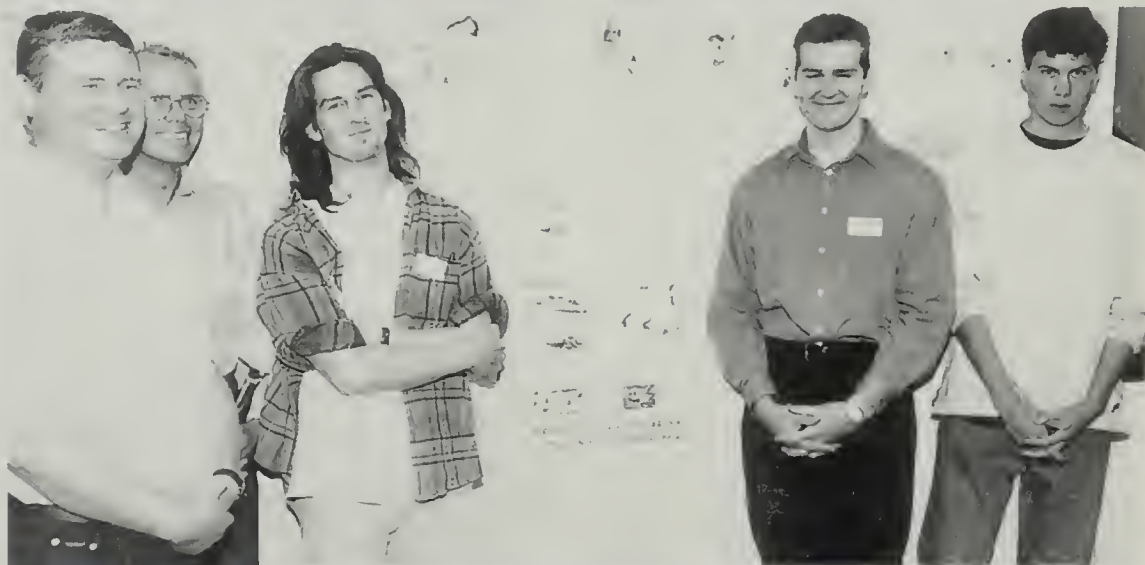
Following Graham Wynne's promotion to Chief Executive (*Brit. Birds* 91: 305), the RSPB's post of Conservation Director has been filled by Dr Mark Avery. Mark has become well known to readers of *British Birds* through his regular column 'Conservation research news'. For six years, Mark fronted the RSPB's research in his role as Head of Conservation Science. Mark will now be able to bring the research

background into the wider conservation scene. It will give him the opportunity not only to work on the results of extensive research, but also to take messages from the field-workers, birdwatchers and RSPB members who often require action based on 'gut feelings'. Under some circumstances, it is only by successfully combining the two that the stable door can be slammed in time. We wish Mark well in his new role.

BIY 1998 and 1999

The 1998 awards were made at The Mall Galleries in London on 22nd July (plate 154). The BIY prizes were presented by Christopher Helm, on behalf of the co-sponsors PICA PRESS and T. & A. D. POYSER; The PJC Award was presented by Mrs Maisie Head, mother of the late Pauline

Cook, in whose honour the Award was established; and The Richard Richardson Award was presented by Bruce Pearson, President of the Society of Wildlife Artists. The closing date for next year's competition will be 15th March 1999. *Entries should be sent to the address given on page 448.*



▲ 154. BIRD ILLUSTRATOR OF THE YEAR: left to right, Peter Michael Beeson (THIRD, BIY), George Brown (THE PJC AWARD), Dan Cole (SECOND, BIY), Paul Henery (WINNER, BIY), Simon Patient (THE RICHARD RICHARDSON AWARD), London, July 1998 (*Peter Wilkinson*)

British Birdwatching Fair 1998

Officially opened by HRH The Fon of Oku; bigger and better than ever; well attended; and with Sir David Attenborough, Bill Oddie and Chris Packham among the crowds.

Friday's 'Universal Bird Challenge' was won (easily!) by OSME ahead of the ABC, with the NBC and the OBC trailing; on Saturday, 'Birdbrain of Britain' was won by Chris Harbard (RSPB); and in Sunday's 'A Question of Birds' Stephen Moss's team, including Tony Marr and Bill Oddie, just pipped Chris Packham's trio.

Many familiar faces called at our stand, and the cool weather was wonderful for sales

of our *BB* sweatshirts. Winners of the bottles of champagne in our 'Mystery Photographs Competition' were Ian Dawson (RSPB), Gary Crowder (Lancashire) and Lynda Haynes (Nottingham).

The aim of the Fair was to raise £100,000 to help conservation of the World's 1,111 most endangered bird species. Organisers Tim Appleton and Martin Davies will doubtless soon report on the Fair's success.

We are already looking forward to the eleventh British Birdwatching Fair, on 20th-22nd August 1999.

Put it in your diary now!

Bobby Tulloch Memorial

Bobby Tulloch, founder member and first President of the Shetland Bird Club, died in May 1996. In his memory, the Club has decided to commission a Memorial, which will take the form of a plaque to be erected close to the Loch of Funzie on Fetlar, one of Bobby's favourite places. With a final cost likely to be in the region of £1,000, the Club has decided to launch an Appeal not just to its present membership, but to any past

members or friends who might also like to make a contribution. If you are one, please send your cheque, made out to The Shetland Bird Club, to George Petrie, Kelstain, Ocrabooy, Cunningsburgh, Shetland, before the end of November, when the Appeal will close. If more money comes in than is required, the Club's Committee will decide how best to use the surplus.

Valerie MacLaren Thom (1929-1998)

I first met Valerie in the early 1960s, when she was a vital member of the band of keen amateur birdwatchers who helped the Wildfowl (& Wetlands) Trust with its winter censuses of grey geese. If you asked Valerie to help with a count, you knew that it would be undertaken with the same conscientiousness, skill and enthusiasm with which she approached all her ornithological interests.

Her work as an agricultural advisor and then with the Countryside Commission for Scotland took her around her home county of Perthshire and more widely throughout Scotland, giving her a valuable understanding of conservation and rural affairs.

She was a long-time supporter of the Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust and of the Scottish Ornithologists' Club, of which she served a distinguished term as President. I vividly recall her standing at the podium and announcing, with obvious relish, that the funds were in place for the long-sought-after project to write a new work on the status of the birds of Scotland and that she was going to be the author and compiler: the fine book *Birds in Scotland* (Poyser 1986) was the result. She also managed spells as editor of both *Scottish Birds* and *Scottish Bird News*.

Scotland's ornithology is the poorer for her passing. (Contributed by Malcolm Ogilvie)

Scilly needs report editor

The Cornwall Bird Watching & Preservation Society is seeking an editor for *The Isles of Scilly Bird Report*, starting on 1st January 1999.

After the production of seven superb, highly acclaimed bird reports, the present Editor, Peter Robinson, has decided to take a well-earned break. Dick Barratt, his Assistant Editor, will also be retiring.

The new Editor will work with the Isles of Scilly Recorder, Will Wagstaff, and establish a new team to write the species accounts. The *Report* is produced with the aid of the COBRA Programme, and computer experience would be advantageous. The team will be fully supported by the CBWPS, which is a Registered Charity (no. 255899).

The post is voluntary, but all reasonable expenses are covered. If you wish to discuss the position further, please contact Will Wagstaff, 42 Sally Port, St Mary's, Isles of Scilly TR21 0JE, tel. 01720 422212; or Graham Sutton (Chairman of CBWPS), 6 Elm Drive, Bude, Cornwall EX23 8EZ, tel. 01288 356605.

Changes on Texel

Having played host to the Dutch Birding Association's birding week on Texel in September, the Texel Birdwatching Centre (TBC) is changing hands. From 1st November 1998, the founder of the Centre, Arend Wassink, will be handing over the reins to the family Brandsema. Arend will continue to live on the island and be closely involved with the Centre.

You can be sure of a warm welcome at the TBC, 94 Vuurtorenweg, De Cocksdorp; tel: 00-31-2223-16416.

Thank you, Sheila

On 23rd October, Sheila Cobban retired, after over 22 years as Personal Assistant to the Managing Editor. Sheila's cheery voice on the telephone and friendly smile at the British Birdwatching Fair will be missed by many *BB* subscribers; her steady hand will be sorely missed in the *BB* office; and Tim says that he fears that everyone will now discover who has really been running *BB* since 1976.

Happy retirement, Sheila!



▲ 155. Sheila Cobban (Tessa Musgrave)

Ian Mitchell joins Seabird 2000

Dr Ian Mitchell has been appointed by the Government's Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) to co-ordinate 'Seabird 2000', the major new census of all breeding seabirds in Britain and Ireland (announced in *Brit. Birds* 91: 261). The JNCC is working in partnership with the statutory nature conservation country agencies, the RSPB, the Seabird Group, the Shetland Oil Terminal Environmental Advisory Group, the National Parks & Wildlife Service

(Ireland) and BirdWatch Ireland.

The census will be during the three years 1999-2001. This huge task will depend upon the efforts of dedicated volunteers and needs the input of *British Birds* readers.

Anyone who wishes to take part in Seabird 2000 should contact Dr Ian Mitchell at the Seabirds & Cetaceans Branch, JNCC, Dunnett House, 7 Thistle Place, Aberdeen AB10 1UZ; fax: 01224 621 488; e-mail: mitche_i@jncc.gov.uk



MONTHLY MARATHON



Although also named as Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola*, Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*, Greater Sand Plover *C. leschenaultii*, Caspian Plover *C. asiaticus*, Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*, White-tailed Lapwing *Vanellus leucurus* and Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina*, 98% of competitors identified the

Cream-coloured Courser *Cursorius cursor* (plate 99), which was photographed by Tony Croucher in Essex in September 1984 (*Brit. Birds* 78: 543).



▲ 156. 'Monthly marathon.' Photo no. 147. Eighth stage in tenth 'Marathon'. Identify the species. Read the rules (*Brit. Birds* 91: 305), then send in your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th December 1998.



LOOKING BACK

Twenty-five years ago, on 6th November 1973, Britain's first Little Swift *Apus affinis* was picked up at Llanrwst, Denbighshire (*Brit. Birds* 67: 328).



RECENT BBRC DECISIONS



All records refer to 1998 unless stated otherwise.

ACCEPTED: **Broad-billed Sandpiper** *Limicola fulcinellus* Minsmere (Suffolk), 26th May. **Spotted Sandpiper** *Actitis macularia* Eyebrook Reservoir (Leicestershire), 9th-10th May. **Laughing Gull** *Larus atricilla* Burnham Norton (Norfolk), 18th-19th May (also, Titchwell, 9th May to June; also Holme and Hunstanton; all Norfolk). **Franklin's Gull** *L. pipixcan* Titchwell, 10th May. **Dark-throated Thrush** *Turdus ruficollis atrogularis* Snettisham (Norfolk), 25th-28th April.

BOURC DECISIONS **Canvasback** *Aythya valisineria* Welney and Wissington, Norfolk, 18th January to 10th March 1997, and **Lesser Sand Plover** *Charadrius mongolus*, Pagham Harbour, West Sussex, 14th-16th August 1997, both already accepted by the BBRC, are now also accepted for Category A by the BOURC.

M. J. Rogers, Secretary, BBRC, 2 Churchtown Cottages, Torvednack, St Ives, Cornwall TR26 3AZ



ANNOUNCEMENT

Editorial phone and fax number

The 'old' number has now been reinstated by BT, so please note that, for all editorial matters,

01767 640025 is the correct number. (See inside front cover for other numbers.)



RECENT REPORTS

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary of unchecked reports covers 14th September to 11th October 1998.

Little Bustard *Tetrax tetrax* Quendale area (Shetland), 4th-6th October. **Western Sandpiper** *Calidris mauri* Deerness (Orkney), 29th September to 3rd October. **Franklin's Gull** *Larus pipixcan* Baltray (Co. Louth), 11th October. **Isabelline Wheatear** *Oenanthe isabellina* Five during 20th September to 4th October: Fair Isle (Shetland); Ardmore Point (Strathclyde); Whitby (North Yorkshire); Southwold (Suffolk); Minsmere (Suffolk). **Red-flanked Bluetail** *Tarsiger cyanurus* Farne Islands (Northumberland), 25th September; near Newburgh, Ythan Estuary (Grampian), 27th-28th September. **Ring Ouzels** *Turdus torquatus* Major influx, mainly on East Coast, in early October, including 700 at St Margaret's Bay and 380 at Capel-Le-Ferne

(both Kent) on 7th. **Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler** *Locustella certhiola* Fair Isle, 30th September; another, 1st-7th October; Skegness (Lincolnshire), 3rd October. **Paddyfield Warbler** *Acrocephalus agricola* Tory Island (Co. Donegal), 21st September. **Olivaceous Warbler** *Hippolais pallida* St Agnes (Scilly), 24th September to 8th October. **Lesser Grey Shrike** *Lanius minor* Lochinver (Highland), 5th-9th October. **Rustic Bunting** *Emberiza rustica* About 30 during 24th September to 6th October, including 16 in Shetland. **Yellow-breasted Bunting** *E. aureola* Tory Island, 21st September. **Bobolink** *Dolichonix oryzivorus* Durigarth (Shetland), 28th September to 5th October.



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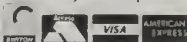
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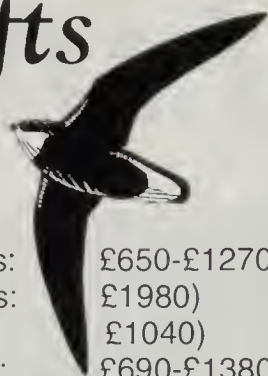


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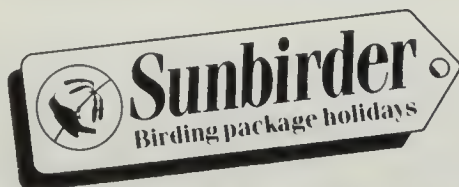
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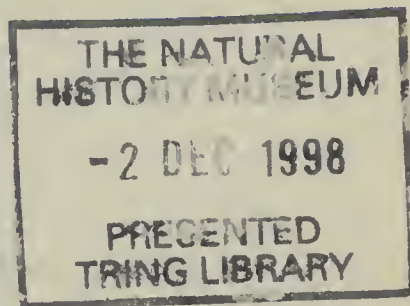
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Front cover: Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola* (*Alan Harris*): the original of this month's cover design, measuring 17.1 × 17.0 cm, is for sale in a postal auction (see page 66 for procedure).



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Volume 91 Number 12 December 1998



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The ornithological year 1997

All-dark petrels in the North Atlantic

Status of Brent Goose in East Siberia





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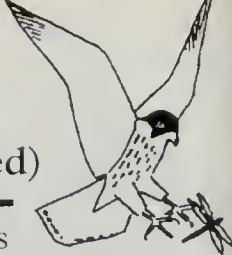
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YOUNG ORNITHOLOGISTS OF THE YEAR

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It was pleasing this year to have an increased number of entries, the majority of a very high standard. The six judges—representing *British Birds*, the British Birds Rarities Committee, the British Ornithologists' Union, the British Trust for Ornithology, the Society of Wildlife Artists and the YOC—had a very enjoyable but long day reading through and comparing the entrants' field notebooks and permanent records. The standard was such that we have chosen to list the runners-up as well as the winners. All those listed below deserve congratulations, though only those placed first in each age category receive prizes.

- SENIOR**
(18-21 years)
- 1st **BEN PHALAN** (20) Co. Wicklow (95%)
2nd Sam Bosanquet (21) Gwent (89%)
3rd Tom Lowe (20) Cheshire (74%)
4th Paul French (20) Cambridgeshire (68%)
- INTERMEDIATE**
(15-17 years)
- 1st **JONATHAN DEAN** (15) Fife (89%)
2nd Robert Martin (16) Nottingham (85%)
3rd Ross Ahmed (15) Tyne & Wear (77%)
- JUNIOR**
(14 and under)
- 1st **ANTHONY PRICE** (9) Shropshire (93%)
2nd Matthew Slaymaker (13) Buckinghamshire (87%)
3rd Sarah Greaves (7) Northamptonshire (72%)
Commended: Hugh Wright (12) Somerset; Mark Mitton (10) Co. Dublin

The three winners—Ben Phalan, Jonathan Dean and Anthony Price—will be presented with their prizes at the BTO Annual Conference in December.

The aim of the competition is to encourage, foster and reward the accurate recording of field observations by young birdwatchers. We hope that, as a result, they will enjoy their hobby and find it even more satisfying, and that some may in due course become the next generation of county bird recorders, BTO representatives or RSPB group leaders, while a few may choose to make a professional career in natural history, ornithology or conservation. Several previous winners of this competition have followed these routes.

Rather than write at length about the entries, we show (pages 524 & 525) some examples of pages from the winners' field notebooks.

Guidelines and rules for the 1999 competition (open to anyone aged under 22 on 1st September 1999) are available from the address below.

J. T. R. Sharrock (BB), Rob Hume (BBRC), B. A. E. Marr (BOU), Dr J. J. D. Greenwood (BTO), Robert Gillmor (SWLA) and Peter Holden (YOC), c/o Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3N7

begin to scare a Hoatic (I could have hit it if I wanted, but aimed several feet to the right). She must have heard. I don't think we'll see that day on the beach again.

Under (a-) Ruff?
A little smaller than Redstart, but same shape - body shape. Upperparts brownish edged gold. Dark legs (??)
Tale short, forked - like a Redstart.

18:30 38 ...
In flight, v. strong sunlight (bad angle) + 15-20 wind made it difficult to see pattern - no v. prominent features. Feet project past tail.

Overall impression like a huge anorectic Redstart.

Tail rather short -> blunt tail end. Perhaps brown in middle, dark at edges?

(?)



Habit of sherry neck when alert - head small.

Darkly gold edged black coverts + scaps. On side of breast, a large white patch (asymmetrical)

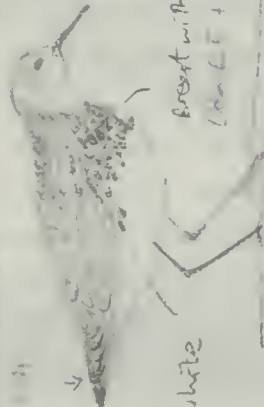
18:50 20 birds banded
- don't seem all that wary
no tailing. (?)

(banded Lark. Yep, a P Ruff (Reeve) - dark legs were all that put me off. Flight pattern distinctive in book, but light was so odd that I couldn't really see it. I'll have to retract my "no" a decent contrast." assertion!

Feed with Redstart. They flew together several times, and fed close to each other for probably 20 minutes. Reeve then separated + flew off to feed on her own.

Not a ♂ as it would have facial warts (this attracts the females? ...)

Bill dark, slightly longer than head.
Tale short, slightly darker on even. (little contrast)
Breast with broad black streaks (black + white mixed)
white
Legs not black - pale brownish colour. Rather small-headed. Must be a molting Ruff (evening edged)
Upperparts/underparts brownish w/ broad buff/gold edges.
Bill f. brownish w/ buff edges (evening edged)



1st year of 1st year



yellowish
brown

1st year

1st year

2nd year

1st year

1st year

1st year

1st year

1st year

1st year



1st year

1st year

Examples from notebooks of
Young Ornithologists of the
Year 1998

Facing page, Ben Phalan
(Senior winner)

Above, Jonathan Dean
(Intermediate winner)

Right, Anthony Price
(Junior winner)

1st year

1st year

1st year

1st year

1st year

1st year

1st year

1st year

1st year

1st year

1st year

1st year

1st year

1st year

1st year



The ornithological year 1997

Barry Nightingale and Keith Allsopp

This report summarises the major bird movements and influxes of 1997, as well as including the rarity highlights. All the rarities noted here have been accepted by the British Birds Rarities Committee; reports still under consideration or not yet submitted are not included. Full details of all major rarities can be found in the annual 'Report on rare birds in Great Britain and Ireland', in the November issue (*Brit. Birds* 91: 455-517).

Echoes from the past

January was the driest since 1880, and in southern England was the coldest for ten years, with easterly winds prevailing until 10th. Temperatures on the near-Continent were some 2°-3°C below the 30-year average. A low of -15.2°C was recorded in Leicestershire on 3rd. During the second half of January, in some areas of Britain at least, it became exceptionally mild.

At the end of 1996, large concentrations of **Smews** *Mergellus albellus* had gathered, no doubt driven out of the Continent by the freezing conditions, and by January had reached impressive numbers. Upwards of 200 were reported each day: about 150 in Norfolk, 86 in Sussex, a peak of 53 in the Dungeness area (Kent), 41 at Wraysbury Gravel-pits (Berkshire), about 60 in Surrey and up to 250 in the English midland counties. High counts of **Goosanders** *Mergus merganser* were made, in some areas of unprecedented numbers, two particularly good totals being 218 at Queen Elizabeth II Reservoir (Surrey) on 12th January and 237 at Blithfield Reservoir (Staffordshire) on 26th January. At QEII Reservoir, the roost of **Great Cormorants** *Phalacrocorax carbo* reached a site-record of 1,149. There were rarer ducks, too, staying over from 1996: the **Black Duck** *Anas rubripes* on Tresco (Scilly), **Lesser Scaups** *Aythya affinis* in Highland and Cornwall, seven **American Wigeons** *Anas americana* and a scattering of **Ring-necked Ducks** *Aythya collaris* (plate 157).

Topping all these, however, was a first-winter male **Canvasback** *Aythya valisineria* at Welney and Wissington (Norfolk) for over seven weeks from 18th January. About 170 **Horned Larks** *Eremophila alpestris* were reported, mainly along the coast from the Wash to Suffolk. Relatively large flocks of **Bohemian Waxwings** *Bombycilla garrulus* were found, in total about 1,200, raising hopes of a repeat of the 1996 influx, but it was not to be, with few straying farther south than Scotland and northern England. A **Dark-throated Thrush** *Turdus ruficollis* of the more-frequent black-throated race *atrogularis* was found wintering inland on 3rd January in Derbyshire (plate 141), and a **Dusky Thrush** *T. naumanni* of the nominate race was found at South Norwood (Greater London) three days later (fig. 7 on page 504). For the second winter running, good concentrations of **Greater Scaups** *Aythya marila* were found off the Norfolk coast, including 210 at Holme. Another echo from the past was the **Olive-backed Pipit** *Anthus hodgsoni*, found in a garden in Brixham (Devon) on 18th January and staying until 9th April (plate 131), by which time over 600 observers had passed through the house to view it. In the second half of January, several notable flypasts of **Red-throated Divers** *Gavia stellata* occurred, including 411 at Sea Palling (Norfolk) on 17th, 1,023 off Borth (Ceredigion) on 25th and 230 east past Hartland (Devon) in under one hour on 29th. At the Ouse Washes, a total of 5,004 **Tundra Swans** *Cygnus columbianus*, with 2,767 at Welney alone on 26th January, compared with about 950 **Whooper Swans** *C. cygnus* for the Washes count on 17th January.

February was very unsettled, with frequent gales, especially in the North and West, but was mild, mean temperatures generally around 3°C above the long-term average. The month's most notable bird was Britain's second **Redhead** *Aythya americana* (or was it perhaps the first returning?), at Rutland Water (Leicestershire) on 4th (fig. 3 on page 469). Numbers of **Smews** had fallen to about 150 per day, but were still notable, and **Bohemian Waxwings** to about 650 in total, but dispersing rapidly by the end of February. At Gibraltar Point (Lincolnshire), **Horned Larks** reached a peak of 42 on 16th, but **Bramblings** *Fringilla montifringilla* were generally in very short supply.

The southwesterly airflow which had dominated February continued into March, bringing further gales and very heavy rain, particularly in the first few days. Arriving at this time, too, were the first southerly migrants, with a **Northern Wheatear** *Oenanthe oenanthe* at Dungeness on 2nd March, that site's earliest ever, and a **Desert Wheatear** *O. deserti* in Dorset on 3rd, which was to be the first of a remarkable 17 in the year—but more of those later. Five **Hoopoes** *Upupa epops* were found in early March, no doubt finding the unseasonably warm weather, with temperatures regularly exceeding 15°C, to their liking.

In the Southwest, there was an interesting observation of four **Red-billed Choughs** *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax* at Lynmouth (Devon) on 8th March, a **White-billed Diver** *Gavia adamsii* past Portland Bill on 13th March, the first for Dorset, and a **Rustic Bunting** *Emberiza rustica*, found in a private garden at Yelverton (Devon) on 22nd. More accessible, for a few days at least, was a very obliging **Little Crake** *Porzana parva* at Bough Beech Reservoir (Kent) during 23rd-30th March (plate 122), recalling the behaviour of the tame individual in East Sussex in March 1985.

April, and some real stars

The weather in April was almost exclusively anticyclonic, until 22nd, with very warm days until 11th. Thereafter, there was a cold northeasterly flow on most days. It was quite sunny and very dry.

A **Scops Owl** *Otus scops* on Tiree (Argyll) and a **Little Bittern** *Ixobrychus minutus* in Somerset (fig. 1 on page 461) were both found on 6th April, and no less interesting were five **Water Pipits** *Anthus spinoletta* in Co. Louth, an unprecedented number for Ireland. A **Semipalmated Plover** *Charadrius semipalmatus* at Dawlish Warren (Devon) was only the second in Britain (plates 106-109), as was a **Spectacled Warbler** *Sylvia conspicillata* at Landguard (Suffolk), found on 20th April, but staying until 2nd May (plate 147), enabling many twitchers to add two star birds to their lists.

A **Cetti's Warbler** *Cettia cetti* at Gibraltar Point on 19th April was the first ever there, and several areas, from Bristol to the London area and East Anglia, reported increases for this species; Bedfordshire recorded its first ever Cetti's in 1997. A **Gyr Falcon** *Falco rusticolus* on St Kilda (Outer Hebrides) on 19th April was followed by a wide scatter of **Black Kites** *Milvus migrans*, with seven between 22nd April and 2nd May. So far, April had been unremarkable for decent falls of summer visitors, but, with warmer air pushing up from the Azores from around 25th April and heavy rain in places, the first noticeable arrivals occurred. At Gibraltar Point on 26th, arrivals included 67 **Common Whitethroats** *Sylvia communis*, whilst the first real spring fall at Dungeness on 27th included 40 **Yellow Wagtails** *Motacilla flava*, 18 **Whinchats** *Saxicola rubetra*, 70 **Northern Wheatears**, 60 **Common Whitethroats** and a few **Common Redstarts** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*. By normal standards, the counts involved were rather insignificant, but they were about the best this spring could muster. It was to be a very poor spring for **Common Redstarts** throughout the passage period, and **Bluethroats** *Luscinia svecica* were not so prominent as in other recent springs, with fewer than 50 reported from the coastal stations.

Several flocks of **Horned Larks** lingered through to the end of April, including 25 at Titchwell (Norfolk) and at least 30 at Gibraltar Point, and a remarkable build-up of **Great Northern Divers** *Gavia immer* during the spring at Deer Sound (Orkney) culminated in a total of 393 on 28th April, possibly Britain's highest-ever count. As temperatures rose, and insect activity increased, so the aerial feeders arrived, two **Alpine Swifts** *Tachymarptis melba*, in Worcestershire and South Yorkshire on 28th April, being the forerunners of seven in May, and a **Red-rumped Swallow** *Hirundo daurica* in Essex on 29th April, which was followed by another 11 during May.

Eurasian Jays *Garrulus glandarius*, not often mentioned in annual reviews, featured strongly at several migration watch-points from the end of April. An unprecedented southerly movement at Dungeness came mainly in two waves, from 30th April to 2nd May and 14th to 20th May, involving a total of 268 birds. On 3rd May, passage was noted in Norfolk, with 40 over Sheringham and 36 at Waxham, and on the same day there were 84 at Gibraltar Point, with 77 there on 9th May.

May—a month of influxes

The warm weather continued into May, and in the London area the temperature reached 27°C on 2nd and 26°C on 3rd, and 23°C as far north as Aviemore (Highland). These high temperatures coincided with a huge movement of **Black Terns** *Chlidonias niger* (plate 162). It was interesting that it lasted just one day (3rd) and was restricted mainly to the midland counties of England. Leicestershire enjoyed the best passage since 1959, with at least 435, including 285 at Rutland Water and 110 at Eye Brook Reservoir, there were 150 in Nottinghamshire and 230 at Draycote Water (Warwickshire). It has been estimated that about 1,400 passed through the English midland counties on that day. In addition, there were 230 in Norfolk, 110 at Abberton Reservoir (Essex), 80 at Dungeness, 85 at Leighton Moss (Lancashire), 200 south at Spurn (East Yorkshire) and 70 in Sussex. By contrast, there were 'only' 50 noted at the London reservoirs, the passage in Surrey was described as 'poor', with only six seen, there were just 11 at Chew Valley Lake (Avon) and Suffolk recorded only a singleton.

During early May, **Pomarine Skuas** *Stercorarius pomarinus* moved along our coasts, and about 1,350 were reported, including 107 past Selsey Bill (West Sussex) on 2nd, 372 past Balranald (Western Isles) on 7th, and 261 there on 13th.

Also arriving on 3rd May, with the Black Terns, were other visitors from more southerly climes, with a **Little Bittern** in Scilly, a **Red-throated Pipit** *Anthus cervinus* at Blakeney Point (Norfolk), a **Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola* in Cornwall, with another in Lancashire on 4th (plate 133), and a **Subalpine Warbler** *Sylvia cantillans* at Tynemouth (Northumberland), the first of 14 to arrive in May. Other multiple arrivals included **Red-footed Falcons** *Falco vespertinus*, with the first of ten May records, at Stodmarsh (Kent) on 5th, a **Little Swift** *Apus affinis* in the Isle of Wight, also on 5th (plates 102 & 103), remarkably the first of three in the year, and then an intriguing group of five **Night Herons** *Nycticorax nycticorax* at Holkham (Norfolk) on 7th May, which stayed until the end of August.

There was a temporary lull in arrivals from 6th May as a sudden change to northerly winds brought snow to some parts, and freezing night temperatures. From 9th to 21st, the weather became very unsettled and windy, and from 16th temperatures rose again. **Red-backed Shrikes** *Lanius collurio* arrived in strength, with about 160 from 9th to the end of May, and over 300 **Dotterels** *Charadrius morinellus* moved through from early to mid May (plate 158). Two **Stone-curlews** *Burhinus oedipnemus* made local news, with one on 13th May on the Teifi Estuary being the first this century for Ceredigion and another, at Netherfield on 23rd May, only the third record for Nottinghamshire this century. So far as the more usual waders were concerned, reports were a little mixed, but, generally speaking, passage was poor, with **Spotted Redshanks** *Tringa erythropus*, **Common Sandpipers** *Actitis hypoleucos* and **Ruffs** *Philomachus pugnax* in low numbers, and with only **Green Sandpipers** *Tringa ochropus* and **Wood Sandpipers** *T. glareola* appearing in above-average strength.

A trio of ace rarities occurred in mid May, with a **Common Yellowthroat** *Geothlypis trichas* on Unst (Shetland) on 16th, and two **Calandra Larks** *Melanocorypha calandra*, one on the Isle of Man on 17th (plate 130) and another at Scolt Head (Norfolk) on 19th, the latter showing for just two hours before disappearing into thick fog. A **Thrush Nightingale** *Luscinia luscinia* in Cleveland on 18th (plate 134) was the first of six, in an average year for the species, whereas a **Great Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* on St Mary's (Scilly) on 19th was one of only three, in a poor year. A **Whiskered Tern** *Chlidonias hybridus* at St Ouen's Pond on 19th was only the second record for Jersey, and a **Gull-billed Tern** *Sterna nilotica*, a rare inland visitor, on the same day at Venus Pool was a first for Shropshire.

In Kent, a **European Bee-eater** *Merops apiaster* at St Margaret's Bay on 9th May was the start of an unprecedented arrival of this species, encouraged no doubt by the very warm and humid conditions over Britain from 16th onwards. During 12th-18th May, about 26 arrived, including nine over St Mary's on 14th and six at Birchington (Kent) on 15th. During 21st-27th May, 32 more were seen, including an incredible flock of 18 at Fulbrook (Oxfordshire), found on 21st (plate 159). The others in this period were all singles. During 29th-31st, another 20 included groups of six at Whitburn (Tyneside) on 30th and Durlston Country Park (Dorset) on 31st, bringing the total for May to about 79. Most occurred in the southern half of England, with 'only' 14 north of a line between the Wash and the Severn. The influx continued into June, with ten singles during the month, and two flocks of four, of which one was in Surrey on 16th and the other in Cornwall on 17th. Amongst all these colourful exotics came another, when a **European Roller** *Coracias garrulus* was found on 25th May, in the New Forest (Hampshire). May closed with Scotland drawing all the aces: a **Lesser Grey Shrike** *Lanius minor* on 28th and a **Little Swift** on 29th, both in Shetland, and a **Great Reed Warbler** on 30th and a **Collared Flycatcher** *Ficedula albicollis* on 31st (plate 146), both in Angus & Dundee.

The Scottish theme continued into June, with another **Lesser Grey Shrike**, in Fife on 1st June, and another **European Roller**, this time in Dumfries & Galloway on 3rd (plate 129). Attention then moved south for a few days, with a **Black-headed Bunting** *Emberiza melanocephala* in Scilly on 3rd, a **Rosy Starling** *Sturnus roseus* on the Isle of Wight on 4th and yet another **Little Swift**, in Dorset, on 5th June, all no doubt comfortable in the warm sunny weather which had continued since 23rd May. On 5th June, as the fine weather started to break, the temperature soared to around 27°C in some southern and southeastern parts of England.

Scilly struck again on 9th June, when a **Paddyfield Warbler** *Acrocephalus agricola* was found on St Mary's, the date atypical but not unprecedented. A **Long-billed Dowitcher** *Limnodromus scolopaceus* at Titchwell (Norfolk) on 10th was followed by another eight by the year end, a fairly typical showing. A small spate of **Little Bitterns** was widely scattered, in Lancashire and Shetland on 12th June and in Norfolk on 13th. Also on 13th, there was a **Squacco Heron** *Ardeola ralloides* in Somerset, followed by three more: at Walton Reservoir on 17th, the first in Surrey this century, in East Sussex on

18th, and on the Gloucestershire/Wiltshire border on 24th (plate 121). And just when we were getting used—almost—to all the European Bee-eaters, along came their rarer cousin, a **Blue-cheeked Bee-eater** *Merops superciliosus* in Shetland on 20th June (plate 128), which stayed long enough to achieve television fame.

Breeding birds and crossbills

Unusual breeding records included a pair of **Common Eiders** *Somateria mollissima* on Anglesey, raising four ducklings, the first breeding record for Wales, and a pair of **Ruddy Ducks** *Oxyura jamaicensis* breeding in Orkney for the first time. **Long-eared Owls** *Asio otus* made their first breeding attempt in Orkney since 1971, and four pairs of **Little Terns** *Sterna albifrons* bred there for only the second time. A solitary **Hoopoe** returned to the previous year's breeding site in Wales, but failed to attract a mate. **Hen Harriers** *Circus cyaneus* bred in the Goyt Valley, raising four young, the first successful breeding in Derbyshire since 1870.

From around 24th June, the best influx of **Common Crossbills** *Loxia curvirostra* since 1990 got under way, and for some areas it was their best ever. In Norfolk, there were 400 during 24th–30th June, and in July they were reported from 41 locations, with the single largest flock being 100 at Swanton Novers. In Suffolk, they were widespread, with coastal passage most evident on 28th June, with 81 at Minsmere and 330 flying south at Felixstowe. At Gibraltar Point on 27th June, 110 was the site's highest-ever count, as was 210 at Spurn on 26th June. Large flocks occurred in the Midlands, with 150 in Nottinghamshire, over 200 in Derbyshire, 250 in Warwickshire, 250 in Worcestershire, about 500 in Staffordshire, while 110 at Leawood on 30th June was the best-ever count for Leicestershire. In the London recording area, there were nearly 300 from 24th June onwards, including 25 over Regent's Park on 1st July. Surrey enjoyed its largest influx ever, with 450 in June, 600 in July and 167 in August. After a lull in September, and as in many other areas, another surge occurred in Surrey, with 200 in October, 300 in November and 200 in December. The influx became nationwide, as indicated by 100 on St Mary's on 3rd July, 500 in Grizedale (Cumbria) in early July, and 18 in the far, far west, on Cape Clear Island (Co. Cork) on 3rd July. In Devon, there were many parties of up to 20, several of 50–60, and flocks of 200 on Dartmoor. Although there was an irruption of **Two-barred Crossbills** *L. leucoptera* on the Continent, none was found in Britain until a meagre two in August, on the Isle of May on 8th (plate 150) and in Norfolk on 21st.

Seabirds, too

The second half of June was wet, with many thunderstorms, stormy winds and much lower temperatures. It was the wettest June of the century.

It was an abnormally cold day for June on 26th, and a low remained stationary over East Anglia for two days, bringing strong easterly airflows, very heavy rain and generally murky conditions. Very localised bird movements occurred during this time. Along the Norfolk coast on 26th June, there were

1,000 **Fulmars** *Fulmarus glacialis* off Sheringham, a **Cory's Shearwater** *Calonectris diomedea*, and good numbers of **Manx Shearwaters** *Puffinus puffinus*, including 364 past Scolt Head, and **Northern Gannets** *Morus bassanus*, including 641 east past Mundesley. A **Sabine's Gull** *Larus sabini* was seen from Cley and Holme, but the best bird in this impressive flypast was a **Madeira/Cape Verde Petrel** *Pterodroma madeira/feae* which was tracked at several points between Blakeney Point and Mundesley. Curiously, this seabird movement was not reflected elsewhere, with only a single **Manx Shearwater** and 26 **Northern Gannets** in this period off Suffolk, and just 13 **Fulmars** and 28 **Northern Gannets** off Gibraltar Point.

Other apparently isolated—but impressive—movements involved 20,000 **Common Swifts** *Apus apus* over Dungeness on 27th June and 25,000 moving south over Gibraltar Point on 16th July, both of which can only have been flocks that were finding conditions for feeding difficult in the very wet weather. The stormy weather pattern had continued into early July, with some localised but serious flooding. Generally, July was warm, but was changeable, with short periods of cyclonic and anticyclonic spells alternating.

A **Golden Eagle** *Aquila chrysaetos* at Antrim plateau (Co. Antrim) on 2nd July was a big rarity for Ireland, in more ways than one, but it was seabirds again that caught the attention. During July, about 170 **Cory's Shearwaters** were seen, mainly off southwestern England, with just a handful of **Great Shearwaters** *Puffinus gravis*, and about 100 **Balearic Shearwaters** *P. mauretanicus*. A **White-rumped Sandpiper** *Calidris fuscicollis* at Cley on 9th July was followed by another there on 17th July, but amazingly these were the only ones of the year. Generally speaking, autumn wader passage was poor, with only **Whimbrels** *Numenius phaeopus* and **Wood Sandpipers** showing in decent numbers, and **Green Sandpipers**, too, including an impressive count of 82 at Cantley Beet Factory (Norfolk) in August. A **Caspian Tern** *Sterna caspia* at Stithians Reservoir on 28th July was the first for Cornwall, followed by others at Breydon (Norfolk) on 30th July, in Kent on 1st August and in Glamorgan on 6th August (or was this one very energetic solo flight?).

Hot temperatures and birds to match

August had begun cloudy and wet, but quickly changed to drier, sunnier days. The weather picture was very patchy, being very dry indeed in central and western Scotland, but exceedingly wet in southwest England. From 6th, there were 19 consecutive days when the temperature reached 27°C in eastern England, and on 10th the mercury reached 33°C at Worcester. It was the second hottest August on record.

A **Baird's Sandpiper** *Calidris bairdii* on the Gannel estuary (Cornwall) on 3rd August was the first of eight for the autumn, and a **Rosy Starling** on Fair Isle (Shetland) on 7th August started a good run of 15 by the year end. With two **Kentish Plovers** *Charadrius alexandrinus* at Dawlish Warren on 8th August, and with both Little Ringed Plover *C. dubius* and Great Ringed Plover *C. hiaticula*, and the long-staying Semipalmated Plover still present, four species of *Charadrius* could be seen on one day at the same location. Another long-stayer was a **Western Sandpiper** *Calidris mauri* at Musselburgh

(Lothian) from at least 9th to 25th August: the first Scottish mainland record (plate 125). The star wader, however, was a **Lesser Sand Plover** *Charadrius mongolus* at Pagham Harbour (West Sussex) during 14th-16th August. At Icklesham (East Sussex), eight **Aquatic Warblers** *Acrocephalus paludicola* (plate 161) were trapped during 9th-10th August, and by mid September about 30 had been trapped there, twice the previous site record. In total, 55 were found in Britain during August. About 50 **Wrynecks** *Jynx torquilla* (plate 160) showed in August, 40 of them during 27th-31st, and **Icterine Warblers** *Hippolais icterina* too, about 110 in all, mostly between 20th August and 12th September. On 19th August, at Esher (Surrey), 1,507 **Rose-ringed Parakeets** *Psittacula krameri* were counted leaving their roost site, a new British record. In contrast, on 22nd August, an **Arctic Warbler** *Phylloscopus borealis* on Out Skerries (Shetland) was the first of only three, and on the same day a **Yellow-breasted Bunting** *Emberiza aureola* on Fetlar was the first of five or six in autumn, all in Shetland. A **Greenish Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochiloides* at Quendale (Shetland) on 23rd August was the first of 11 by the end of August.

In an already good seabird year, there was still much more to come, with tremendous numbers of shearwaters appearing off southwest coasts, with 600 **Cory's** and 1,000 **Great Shearwaters** off Porthgwarra (Cornwall), and 250 Greats off Scilly, all during 23rd-24th August. Off Cape Clear Island, 400 Greats on 24th were followed by 1,700 on 25th, and then a staggering 5,285 on 26th August. With two hours on that last date uncounted, and with passage at a rate of about 800 per hour, there could have been nearly 7,000 Great Shearwaters flying past there that day. From mid August, **Sabine's Gulls** showed, with about 70 off English coasts, and one or two inland, but Ireland again stole the honours with almost 1,000 seen in a phenomenal spell. The best count was 347 off Brandon Point (Co. Kerry) on 29th August. Other big counts included 137 **Little Egrets** *Egretta garzetta* roosting at Thorney Island (West Sussex) on 24th August, but outnumbered by a count of 165 **Greenshanks** *Tringa nebularia* there. At Strumble Head (Pembrokeshire), 112 **Black Terns** on 27th August were also noteworthy.

For landbirds, August had, up to now, been fairly unremarkable. From 23rd, a high-pressure area east of the Baltic moved north and became established to the east of northern Scandinavia. By 27th, a deep low moved to the north of Ireland, and on 28th the first autumn fall occurred in the Scottish islands. Relatively small numbers of **Wrynecks**, **Common Redstarts**, **Whinchats**, **Garden Warblers** *Sylvia borin*, **Willow Warblers** *Phylloscopus trochilus* and **Pied Flycatchers** *Ficedula hypoleuca* were involved, accompanied by two **Greenish Warblers**. On 30th August, another fall on North Ronaldsay included 252 **Northern Wheatears** and 43 **Whinchats**, and a further movement there on 1st September included 16 **Icterine Warblers**, eight **Barred Warblers** *Sylvia nisoria*, 55 **Pied Flycatchers** and 51 **Tree Pipits** *Anthus trivialis*. An **Arctic Warbler** was found on Fetlar on the same day.

September—a magic spell for Fair Isle

After the heat of August, September was warm and sunny, but was much more pleasant. It was also a dry month. The sea was still scoring over land,

and watchers at Strumble Head found a **Wilson's Storm-petrel** *Oceanites oceanicus* on 5th. **Leach's Storm-petrels** *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* were appearing too, with about 1,000 off Irish coasts and about 2,000 off British coasts, mainly in the Northwest, and mostly during 8th-15th. On the East Coast, Suffolk had its best-ever autumn for this species, with at least 23, mainly during 19th-21st September. A **Stilt Sandpiper** *Micropalama himantopus* at Minsmere on 7th September (plate 127) was the first since 1990, and a **Little Shearwater** *Puffinus assimilis* at Strumble Head on 12th September was the first since 1994. **Siskins** *Carduelis spinus* were in abundance, and a significant passage was noted at Portland Bill, with 1,300 moving through during 13th-14th September. By 20th September, a ridge of high pressure had stretched right across eastern Europe and it was to that direction that our attention now turned. Almost on cue, an **Isabelline Wheatear** *Oenanthe isabellina* appeared on Bardsey (Caernarfonshire) on 20th, the first for Wales, to be followed by another, different individual on Skokholm (Pembrokeshire). It was now time for Fair Isle to step into the spotlight, and it did so in classic style. A **Paddyfield Warbler** on 21st was followed by a **Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler** *Locustella certhiola* on 24th, an **Olive-backed Pipit** on 26th (with another on 27th), and a **Pechora Pipit** *Anthus gustavi* and a **Lanceolated Warbler** *Locustella lanceolata*, also both on 26th, the same day as a Lanceolated at Landguard. Another Lanceolated Warbler was found on Fair Isle on 27th, another on Bardsey (making four in two days), and a second **Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler**, at Sumburgh (Shetland), all on the same day, and then a third Pallas's Grasshopper, at Kergord (Shetland) on 28th September. There was another **Paddyfield Warbler** on Fair Isle and a **Dusky Warbler** *Phylloscopus fuscatus* at Spurn on 28th and, perhaps best of all, a **White's Thrush** *Zoothera dauma* on Foula (Shetland) on 29th September. During all this excitement, good numbers of **Siskins** continued to arrive, and also about 100 **Yellow-browed Warblers** *Phylloscopus inornatus* during 25th-30th September. In a poor month for migration at Gibraltar Point, the commonest migrant had been **Goldcrest** *Regulus regulus*, the passage peaking with 350 on 28th. Nearly one-third of all the birds ringed during September at Portland Bill were also of this species.

Seabirds were still making an impression, with 1,060 **Great Shearwaters** past Rocky Point (Co. Donegal) in five hours on 29th September, whilst one past Burra-voe on 30th was a major Shetland rarity.

Birders on their starting blocks

October was very sunny, apart from the second week, was often anticyclonic and was another dry month.

A **Ross's Gull** *Rhodostethia rosea* on North Ronaldsay on 2nd October was a first for Orkney and a **Great White Egret** *Egretta alba* in Co. Antrim on 8th was the first for Northern Ireland. This is the time when many birders are holding their breath for the next rarity to turn up, and they did not have long to wait. A **Dark-throated Thrush** on Fetlar on 8th was followed by another in Shetland on 10th, and then, again on Fetlar, a **Radde's Warbler** *Phylloscopus schwarzi* showed on 10th, the first of eight during the next 12



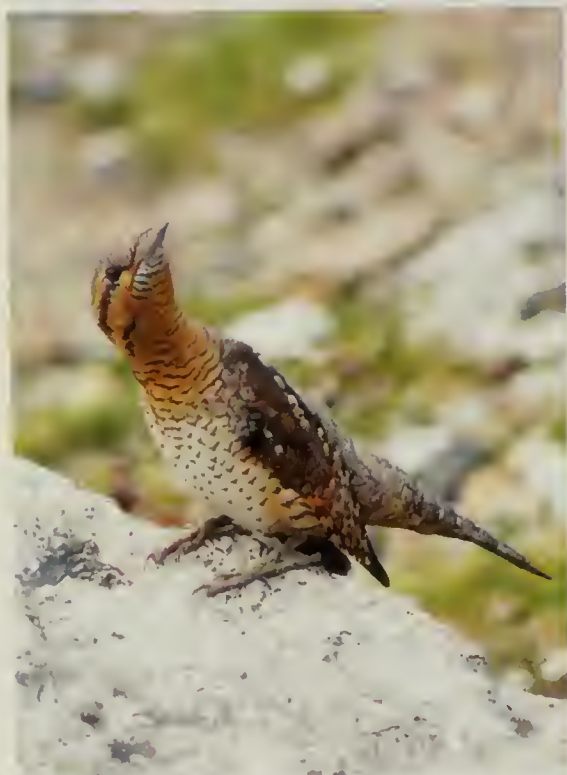
▲ 157. Male Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris*, London, January 1997 (Iain H. Leach)



▲ 158. Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus*, Thornham, Norfolk, May 1997 (Iain H. Leach)



▲ 159. Seven European Bee-eaters *Merops apiaster*, part of a flock of 18, Fulbrook, Oxfordshire, May 1997 (Steve Young/Birdwatch)



▲ 160. Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*, Seaforth, Lancashire, September 1997 (Steve Young/Birdwatch)



▲ 161. Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola*, West Bexington, Dorset, August 1997 (George Reszeter)



▲ 162. Black Tern *Chlidonias niger*, Seaforth, Lancashire, May 1997 (Steve Young/Birdwatch)

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days. Sandwiched between these easterly vagrants were two Nearctic wood-warblers: a **Common Yellowthroat** found on St Mary's on 9th (plate 152), and then a **Blackpoll Warbler** *Dendroica striata* on Tresco on 12th October (plate 151). Both were to be long-stayers, although elusive at times for the crowds of watchers who, particularly in Scilly, were becoming bored by the lack of rarities. The cause of their frustration was a strong northerly airflow which by 10th October stretched from northern Scandinavia southward through Britain, effectively slowing down the arrival of eastern and southern vagrants.

A spectacular arrival of **Redwings** *Turdus iliacus* occurred in many parts on 12th October. In the London area, 12,000 passed over Hampstead Heath in three hours, 3,600 flew over Brent Reservoir and 2,000 were over Stockers Lake in one hour. In Staffordshire, there were 5,000 in Coombes Valley during 11th-13th, and large influxes were noted in Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire. At Minsmere, 5,000 were estimated on 12th, with 1,600 at Gibraltar Point the same day and heavy overnight passage was noted at Sheringham and Horning (Norfolk) during 11th-12th. In Surrey there was possibly the heaviest-ever influx, with 10,000 west over Beddington Sewage-farm and 5,250 at Unstead Sewage-farm on 12th, by which time good numbers had also reached Guernsey.

We are now getting used to large numbers of **Pallas's Leaf Warblers** *Phylloscopus proregulus* arriving, and in the second half of October about 120 were found. There were 25 in Norfolk during 14th-31st, an arrival surpassed only by autumn 1996, and with a shift to an easterly airflow during 20th-21st nine arrived in Scilly. About 135 **Yellow-browed Warblers** arrived too, with the peak during 17th-19th, and one at La Coupe on 23rd was, surprisingly, only the sixth record for Jersey.

There had been some remarkable movements of the more regular species this year and more were to come. On 16th October, an incredible passage of finches occurred west along the Norfolk coast, involving mainly **Chaffinches** *Fringilla coelebs*, with 24,000 at Sheringham, 2,000 per hour at Brancaster, 10,000 at Holme and an amazing 85,000 at Hunstanton. **Greenfinches** *Carduelis chloris* featured, too, with 1,000 at Holme, where there were also 1,000 **Goldfinches** *C. carduelis*, 300 **Siskins** and 1,000 **Linnets** *C. cannabina*. This passage was clearly on a very narrow front, for it was not reflected in Lincolnshire or Suffolk. At the same time, huge numbers of **Common Starlings** *Sturnus vulgaris* arrived in Norfolk, with a series of counts at Holme, starting with 5,000 on 14th October, 10,000 on 16th, and 100,000 on 18th, and at Cley, with 6,000 on 19th, and then 35,000 at Titchwell on 22nd October. A **Desert Wheatear** at Dungeness on 16th was, too, the start of an unprecedented rush, with 15 more to arrive before the year end. Two **Dusky Warblers**, both in Shetland, appeared on 17th, with another four to arrive in October. **Richard's Pipits** *Anthus novaeseelandiae* appeared regularly throughout October, about 50 in total, 11 of which came during 17th-19th. And it was 19th October that really set the pagers bleeping and telephones ringing as news broke of a **Siberian Rubythroat** *Luscinia caliope* at Osmington Mills (Dorset) (plate 135). With a **Red-throated Pipit**

at Dungeness, **Arctic Warbler** at Whitby (North Yorkshire), **Isabelline Shrike** *Lanius isabellinus* in Devon, and a **Red-flanked Bluetail** *Tarsiger cyanurus* on inaccessible land in Leicestershire (plate 136), this was 'The Big Day' of the year, certainly so far as rarities were concerned. Two **Pied Wheatears** *Oenanthe pleschanka*, at Sheringham on 20th October and at Kilnsea (East Yorkshire) the next day (plate 138), virtually completed the full set of rare wheatears for the year, in contrast to the rather bleak 1996. The airflow then once more swung around to the north, and strengthened. An **Ivory Gull** *Pagophila eburnea* at Kinnaird's Head (Northeast Scotland) on 24th October (plates 104 & 105) completed a good brace of rare gulls—a Ross's Gull had been found there in January (plate 112). A **Paddyfield Warbler** on North Ronaldsay on 26th October arrived with 130 **Snow Buntings** *Plectrophenax nivalis*, followed by two more **Pied Wheatears**, in Lancashire on 27th (plate 137) and Northumberland on 29th. An **Alpine Accentor** *Prunella collaris* on 30th at Strumble Head was the first Welsh record this century and it rounded off an excellent autumn for that locality.

The last week of October had brought widespread sharp frosts, providing a foretaste of the season to come, and bringing a decidedly wintry feel to the new arrivals. About 18 **Rough-legged Buzzards** *Buteo lagopus* appeared in November, including five in Norfolk, but none lingered, and numbers of **Horned Larks** once again started to build up. In November, low pressure again dominated, winds blew frequently from the south, and it was to be the fourth-equal warmest November on record. A **Firecrest** *Regulus ignicapillus* which arrived on North Ronaldsay with a large fall of **Blackbirds** *Turdus merula* and **Fieldfares** *T. pilaris* on 4th November was only the fourth for Orkney. Two **Dusky Warblers** on 5th November, in Scilly and on the Farne Islands (Northumberland), were the first of nine in November, following the six in October. Mainly from 11th November, **Snow Buntings** continued to arrive, with up to 360 at Deerness and many counts into three figures in Norfolk. A few crept into inland counties. And, just like buses, after a long wait for the first, a second **Ross's Gull** came along to Orkney, again on North Ronaldsay.

From 16th November, deep lows brought strong westerly gales across the Atlantic, probably responsible for the arrival of a **Franklin's Gull** *Larus pipixcan* in Cornwall on 18th November. By now, rarities were, however, getting decidedly thin on the ground, but two late **Isabelline Shrikes**, in Suffolk on 23rd and on North Ronaldsay on 30th, and two **Hume's Warblers** *Phylloscopus humei*, in East Sussex on 16th (plate 144) and in Kent on 25th, saw November out in some style.

December was changeable and rather mild, with unsettled westerly and southwesterly weather prevailing. Two **Desert Wheatears** arrived on 10th December, in a very mild spell, in Gloucestershire and Northumberland (plate 140), and, with three earlier arrivals still around, five were present in Britain on this one day, to be followed by another on Skokholm on 12th December. Three **Penduline Tits** *Remiz pendulinus* in Somerset on 14th December, staying to 21st, and four at Hickling (Norfolk) on 20th December rounded off an excellent year for this species, too.

In a year with very few American passerines, a **Dark-eyed Junco** *Junco hyemalis* in a garden in Chester (Cheshire) was a real bonus to end the year, as was a **Brünnich's Guillemot** *Uria lomvia* which arrived off Fetlar and stayed until 30th December.

So ended a somewhat erratic, but rarely dull year. Of course, if you missed out on the bee-eater influx and the crossbills, failed to get excited about large numbers of Black Terns and seabirds, did not happen to be in Dorset on 19th October, and were not on Fair Isle at the end of September, then you could be excused for thinking that it was rather ordinary. On the other hand, there were plenty of opportunities for making it a rather splendid year.

Acknowledgments

We are most grateful to the numerous individual correspondents, national, regional, county and local societies, and bird observatories, whose information has been used to compile this summary. We are especially grateful to the British Birds Rarities Committee for complete information on its nationally accepted major rarities.

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Appeal to all bird recorders, bird-club secretaries and bird-observatory wardens

In order to make these annual reviews a complete reflection of the year's major happenings, and not just those associated with rarities, we should like to receive as many local reports as possible. Please send them to Barry Nightingale at the above address.



LOOKING BACK

One hundred years ago: 'The Cirl Bunting in Breconshire. At the present time the Cirl Bunting (*Emberiza cirlus*) is a firmly established resident in this county, and is to be found in at least five or six localities . . . I found a nest containing four eggs . . . A few days afterwards I heard two male birds of the same species in song near the site . . . One of them I shot . . . nearly every summer its song is to be heard in some fresh locality. It seems partial to hill-sides furnished with gorse and isolated elm and oak trees . . . I have obtained several specimens for myself and friends; a pair in my collection are in full adult plumage, and a bird which I obtained for the Hereford Museum is an immature male . . . (*Zoologist* Ser. 4, vol. 2: 478-479, November 1898)

Twenty-five years ago: 'Nobel Prize winners Seldom, if ever before, have scientists who could be described as ornithologists been the recipients of a Nobel Prize. We therefore offer our congratulations to Professor Niko Tinbergen and Professor Konrad Lorenz, who this year share, together with Karl von Frisch, the Nobel Prize for Medicine. This award, the highest honour to which a scientist can aspire, is in recognition of their roles as founding fathers of the behavioural science of ethology. While Karl von Frisch has worked mainly with insects, Niko Tinbergen and Konrad Lorenz have done some of their most important work on birds. It might not be out of place here to praise their writings for non-specialist readers, too; and their books *The Herring Gull's World* (1953), and *King Solomon's Ring* (1952) and *On Aggression* (1970), have been deservedly successful.' (*Brit. Birds* 66: 542, December 1973)



All-dark petrels in the North Atlantic

Stephen Morrison

ABSTRACT Of 69 reports of all-dark petrels in the North Atlantic, mostly since 1980, 22 have resulted in positive identification: 13 as Swinhoe's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma monorhis* (14 individuals, all trapped) and nine as Bulwer's Petrel *Bulweria bulwerii* (ten birds). Many of the unidentified storm-petrels seem likely also to have been Swinhoe's, rather than the rare dark-rumped variant of Leach's Storm-petrel *O. leucorhoa*. It appears possible that this warm-water species entered the South Atlantic from its Indian Ocean wintering grounds, tried to migrate north and, moving into the North Atlantic, became trapped; general oceanographic conditions would assist passage of Swinhoe's around South Africa, and frequent influxes may have occurred. Although circumstantial evidence also suggests the possibility that the species may breed on the Selvagens (Madeira), this remains unproven. Accounts of larger unidentified petrels in the English Channel are similar to published descriptions of Matsudaira's Storm-petrel *O. matsudairae*; but they could also refer to Bulwer's Petrel showing a flight pattern poorly described or rarely seen,

or, in one case, in moult. A great number of other records of similar birds strongly suggest Bulwer's Petrel, and these coincide with the occurrence of other warm-water species such as Cape Verde Petrel *Pterodroma feae* and Swinhoe's Storm-petrel. It seems possible that all the larger all-dark petrels observed in the northeast Atlantic were Bulwer's Petrels.

There are 69 known reports of all-dark petrels (Procellariidae) and storm-petrels (Hydrobatidae) in the North Atlantic, the vast majority in the period from 1980 onwards. These have involved a total of at least 74 individuals, only 24 of which have been positively identified: 14 as Swinhoe's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma monorhis* (all trapped) and ten as Bulwer's Petrel *Bulweria bulwerii*. Of the remaining 50 records, 22 were thought to involve a species related to Leach's Storm-petrel *O. leucorhoa* (i.e. one of the smaller *Oceanodroma* species), while 27 other descriptions were of a much larger species, including five that did not seem to fit current descriptions of Bulwer's Petrel. The purpose of this paper is to try to clarify the situation regarding the presence of small all-dark petrels in the North Atlantic and to throw light on their status, distribution, origin, and identification.

As Swinhoe's and the occasional nearly (rarely, fully) dark-rumped variant of Leach's are the only all-dark storm-petrels known to have occurred in the North Atlantic, it seems likely that many of the at-sea records of small all-dark storm-petrels refer to one of these species. Since most of the records of trapped Swinhoe's Storm-petrels have been documented elsewhere (James & Robertson 1985; Carruthers *et al.* 1989; Cubitt 1991, 1995; Cubitt *et al.* 1992; Dawson 1992; King & Minguez 1994), the following discussion deals mainly with these at-sea records.

Swinhoe's Storm-petrel breeds in the northwest Pacific Ocean on islands off Korea, off Shantung in China, and off Honshu, Shikoku and Kyushu in Japan, and on the Verkhovski and Karamzin Islands near Vladivostok. It winters in the Indian Ocean, where it seems to be widely distributed.

Leach's Storm-petrel of the nominate race breeds on headlands and islands in the North Pacific between Russia/Japan and California, USA, and in the North Atlantic between Massachusetts, USA, and western Norway. The subspecies *chapmani* breeds in the summer on Islas San Benito and Islas Los Coronados, Mexico, and *socorroensis* breeds in summer on islets off Guadalupe Island, Mexico; the inadequately documented race *cheimomnestes* is said to breed on Guadalupe during the winter, although apparently no reliable specimens have been produced. The validity of these last two races has been disputed, and it has also been suggested that both the winter and the summer breeding populations should be placed within *socorroensis*, while the inclusion of the intermediate *beali* and, by some authors, *chapmani* in nominate *leucorhoa* may be too general a classification (Ainley 1980, 1983; Bourne & Jehl 1982; Power & Ainley 1986); indeed, recent work on the south Californian islets (Dr W. R. P. Bourne *in litt.*) suggests that the situation is far more complex. The populations of the southeastern North Pacific disperse

south to warm equatorial waters in the non-breeding season. The nominate race is highly migratory, moving south to equatorial waters in both the Pacific and the Atlantic, although some remain in the northern hemisphere where food supply allows, while at least a few occasionally wander to other oceans.

Records of all-dark storm-petrels in the North Atlantic

The 31 records are summarised below in chronological order. Trapped individuals, marked with an asterisk (*), were all identified as Swinhoe's, and many of the at-sea records, while not entirely excluding dark-rumped Leach's Storm-petrel, are also indicative of this species (i.e. a small *Oceanodroma* storm-petrel with an all-dark rump). Descriptions were not received for those records marked with a cross (+). Note that, for trapped Swinhoe's (of which all but the 1983 Selvagens bird and those in Tyneside were captured in the early hours of the date given), the presence of a brood patch is unknown unless stated.

A nineteenth-century Madeiran record of an all-dark petrel, identified as Bulwer's Petrel by Harcourt in 1855 but showing characteristics of a storm-petrel, seems likely to belong to this family (Bourne 1990) and is, therefore, included below.

- 1829 MADEIRA: one small dark storm-petrel type with forked tail on unknown date (C. Heineken).*
- 1971 USA Off Oregon Inlet, North Carolina: one on 2nd October (R. Rowlett).
- 1982 FRANCE Cherbourg: one at sea on 16th October (*Ibis* 133: 351-356).+
- 1983 MADEIRA Selvagens: one female heard on various nights from 29th June, trapped 8th July (P. C. James, H. A. Robertson).*
- 1986 ENGLAND Spurn, Humberside: one moving north on 27th May (S. Lister).
- 1988 MADEIRA Selvagens: one trapped on 30th June (V. Bretagnolle).*
- 1989 FRANCE Ile de Banneg, Brittany: one trapped on 15th July, retrapped on 24th July (F. Bisret, V. Bretagnolle *et al.*).*
- ENGLAND Tynemouth, Tyne & Wear: one 'possible' seen circling trapping area on 19th July (not included in totals); separate females trapped on 23rd and 26th July (M. P. Carruthers, M. G. Cubitt, L. Hall, A. Hutt).*
- BELGIUM Ostend: one, possibly two, moving north on 7th October (L. Janssen, R. de Smet).
- BELGIUM Mariakerke: one at sea on 7th October, probably different from above record (T. Goethals).
- NETHERLANDS Schiermonnikoog: one at sea on 8th October (B. de Bruin, L. Steijn, R. E. van der Vliet *et al.*).
- ENGLAND Portland Bill, Dorset: one moving west on 24th December (R. Newton).
- 1990 MAURETANIA 23°N, 18°W: one at sea on 20th January (W. R. P. Bourne).

ENGLAND Tynemouth, Tyne & Wear: one female trapped on 7th July; subsequently retrapped on 31st July 1991 (with brood patch), on 30th July 1992 (with brood patch), on 21st, 28th and 29th July 1993, and on 24th and 26th July 1994 (and perhaps the same female heard on 12th July 1994) (M. P. Carruthers, M. G. Cubitt, P. Harris, D. Hirst, A. Hutt *et al.*).*

FRANCE Noirmoutier: one at sea on 11th August (A. Reille).

ENGLAND Hilbre Island, Merseyside: one moving south on 20th September (D. Goulding, P. Kenyon).

ENGLAND Cley, Norfolk: one moving east on 25th September (*Birding World* 3: 296); presumably the same individual flew south off Ness Point, Suffolk, later that day (J. Cawston).

1991 MADEIRA Selvagens: one with brood patch trapped on 23rd July (F. Zino).*

ITALY Genoa: one captured sick on 11th August (R. Savio).*

ENGLAND Sea area Sole, c. 25 miles southwest of Scilly: one on 18th August (J. Clifton, R. A. Kempster, J. Knifton, H. Vaughan).

1992 ENGLAND Selker Point, Cumbria: one at sea on 30th August (A. Strand).

1993 ENGLAND Minsmere, Suffolk: one at sea on 28th July (B. J. Small, M. Smith).

ENGLAND Sea area Sole, from MV *Scillonian* between Scilly and Cornwall: one on 9th August (R. Clay).

ENGLAND Sea area Sole, from MV *Scillonian*: one on 15th August (observers unknown).+

USA Off Manteo, North Carolina, 35°N, 74°W: one on 20th August (E. Brinkley).

MADEIRA Selvagens: one female with brood patch trapped on an unknown date in summer; possibly same individual (with a leg missing) retrapped on 30th August 1994, on an unknown date in summer 1995 and on 29th August 1996 (F. Zino).*

1994 SPAIN Islote de Benidorm: one (male?) with brood patch trapped on 13th July (B. Arroyo, J. King, S. Mazzoletti, L. & C. Palomores).*

1996 NORWAY Revtangen, Jaeren, Rogaland: one without brood patch trapped on 13th August (M. Kersbergen *et al.*).*

MADEIRA: one at sea on 29th August (*Birding World* 9: 350).+

1997 NORWAY Revekaien, Rogaland: one trapped on 9th August (*Dutch Birding* 19: 200).*

SPAIN Cabrera, Balearic Islands: one trapped on 16th August (*Birding World* 10: 293).*

A full analysis of every record is not feasible, but two of the more complete and typical accounts are repeated below (original descriptions, with only minor subediting).

SITE AND DATE Hilbre Island, Merseyside, England. One moving south on 20th September 1990.

OBSERVERS D. Goulding, P. Kenyon.

WEATHER Overcast, windy, visibility excellent.

TIME AND DURATION OF SIGHTING About mid morning, for five minutes.
 DISTANCE Down to 100 feet [30 m].

DESCRIPTION Plumage was dark brown/blackish all over, apart from an inconspicuous pale upperwing-covert bar which extended almost to the carpal joint but not onto the primary coverts. The tail was shortish with only a semblance of a fork but not forked as much as Leach's. Neither the tail nor the rump showed any pale feathers. The wings appeared slightly longer than those of Leach's and were also angled at the carpal joint, but other than this the

bird was of a similar size. All these observations gave the bird the appearance of an all-dark *Oceanodroma* apart from the pale wingbar. The flight of the petrel was also interestingly different as it seemed to fly lower over the water. It behaved in a similar fashion to the Leach's, with vertical lifts, but instead of hanging over the water or paddling it would simply swoop powerfully down and continue on its way. (27× telescope used)

SITE AND DATE 35°33'N, 74°53'W, off Manteo, North Carolina, USA. 20th August 1993.
 OBSERVER E. Brinkley.

WEATHER Clear, excellent light, wind SE? force 2-3.

TIME AND DURATION OF SIGHTING First located at 12.39 hours and presumably the same individual was refound at 13.56 and then watched for two minutes.

DISTANCE 10-100 m.

DESCRIPTION Large storm-petrel with long wings, held out and away from the body, more so than on Leach's. Darker above than Leach's, more a blackish-brown, with smaller grey or off-white (dusky) carpal bar, not extending to carpal joint. Bar of uniform width throughout length.

Dark rump seen well—extended views of dorsal at close range; caudal projection apparently longer than Leach's, but perhaps an artefact of wings held at wider angle (i.e. not a sharp angle). About Leach's size, perhaps 5-10% larger (again, this may be an illusion stemming from flight attitude).

'Hands' less pointed than Leach's, with apparently more area (also very much dependent on flight attitude). White shaft streaks in primaries clearly visible in excellent light at 30 feet (c. 10 m) with binoculars. Not visible past 50-60 feet (15-18 m). At least 5-6 shaft streaks noted. Notch in tail noted twice. Rump concolorous with tail (very dark brown), back only slightly paler. No wood-brown, buffy or golden tones in the dorsal area at all, despite strong (noonday) light.

Flight (behaviour) unusual in my experience. Erratic hovering almost like noddy [*Anous*], with very slow, deliberate

wingbeats—long-winged look especially prominent in this flight attitude (appeared to be investigating something on the water's surface); locomotion exclusively by two strong, long-winged bounds and an effortless, shallow dynamic soar (best described as a 'rollercoaster' pattern [Brinkley 1995]), about 1 m above the ocean's surface—Leach's soars in high winds, but winds less than ten knots now, probably five.

... I have seen around 500 Leach's in the past 15 years, and I feel that this bird has a very different jizz in the field, perhaps also a different structure. Proportions on a flying bird were difficult to assess, since the different posture made the wings look very long, but the tail (or rather the entire caudal projection) also looked long for a Leach's type, since the wings were not swept back ... I cannot comment on [European records of Matsudaira's], but the bird discussed above looked longer-winged than I believe it to have been (when seen next to Wilson's [*Oceanites oceanicus*]). I do not think it was in Matsudaira's size class, even though its flight jizz allowed a split-second consideration of Bulwer's Petrel at a distance.

Two records from the list above could not safely be identified as either Swinhoe's or Leach's from what was observed. The first, in North Carolina on 2nd October 1971, following the passage of hurricane 'Ginger', was in the general proximity of two White-faced Storm-petrels *Pelagodroma marina*, as well as at least 30 Leach's; the occurrence of White-faced may suggest the area of origin. The second was off Mauretania, on 20th January 1990. Other

accounts mention, to a greater or lesser degree, characters noted in the above two descriptions, but in addition some record a less erratic flight than Leach's in strong winds, varying tone in the colour of the upperwing-covert bar (which, in the majority of cases, also appeared buffy-white along the edges, as opposed to the grey-white of Leach's) and, in one instance, pale underwing-coverts. Two characters were observed by V. Bretagnolle when he released his 1989 Ile de Banneg Swinhoe's far offshore, in calm and sunny conditions: the primary shafts were visible at up to 250 m distance with 10× binoculars; and 'its flight pattern was unlike that of Leach's in that it would rise up like a Leach's, from the sea's surface, but then "swoop down" again rather than drop or shear down'.

Of all these observations, the individual off North Carolina in 1993 was seen exceptionally well, and as a result all characters consistent with Swinhoe's were seemingly confirmed. Other records seem likely to be referable to this species on the basis of date and features apparently typical of Swinhoe's, but they could not be confirmed beyond all doubt owing to lack of further descriptive evidence, generally because of weather conditions and distance.

Dark-rumped Leach's Storm-petrels

Leach's Storm-petrels showing a dark rump have occurred in the North Atlantic, but they are exceedingly rare; indeed, they are unknown to observers in Newfoundland, each of whom has seen well over 10,000 Leach's (B. Mactavish *in litt.*). So far as we are aware, the only definite North Atlantic record is of an individual with a completely dark rump found dead at Oneida Lake, New York, USA, on 7th September 1933 (part of a general seabird 'wreck'); it was identified by Dr R. C. Murphy as a moulting Leach's Storm-petrel (Sadler 1933).

Other Leach's Storm-petrels with a partially dark rump have been observed. The one with the most extensive dark was an individual retrieved from Ascension on 22nd January 1964 and deposited in the Natural History Museum, Tring: it was only just perceptibly paler on each side of the base of the rump when examined carefully in the hand; the rump markings approximated to scale ten of Ainley's (1980) scale of one to eleven (Bourne & Simmons 1997), and the rump would therefore appear all dark at sea. Another Leach's, closely observed in the Gulf Stream off North Carolina on 27th July 1992, showed an entirely dark rump 'save for a pale border that highlighted the sides of the rump "V-like"' (M. Tove *in litt.*). About 20 other records have been located, most from the Gulf Stream and in British waters (reflecting observer density), while smaller numbers have been seen farther south in equatorial waters during the winter. The majority occur in the late summer and autumn, suggesting that these are heavily worn or moulting individuals. When the pale edges of the central rump feathers wear away, this leads to an apparent darkening of the central rump; in extreme cases, the only pale areas remaining are restricted to the sides, producing two parallel patches or a 'V' mark. Such individuals, having worn edges to the upperwing-coverts, will also show a subdued wingbar. Presumably, any aberrant Leach's would

show these dark rump markings all year around, but should still (unless worn) show a prominent upperwing-covert bar.

The likelihood of examples of the eastern Pacific Leach's complex turning up in these waters is very slim. The most likely route is via the Drake Passage, but they would have to traverse a distance of approximately 11,000 km and pass over the cold northward-flowing Peru Current (which effectively blocks any southward movement of warm-water species). The possibility that an unknown colony of dark-rumped Leach's exists in the North Atlantic, paralleling those of the tropical east Pacific, cannot be excluded, but the species is currently known to breed no farther south than Massachusetts, USA, at 41°N.

Identification of Swinhoe's Storm-petrel

According to current literature, Swinhoe's Storm-petrel is dark brown (though appearing blackish at a distance), with greyish underwing-coverts which may occasionally show in flight, and with a generally inconspicuous but variable upperwing-covert bar. The outer primaries have white shafts which are not so obvious as on Matsudaira's Storm-petrel, the only other all-dark storm-petrel to exhibit this feature to any degree. As Leach's, it soars, twists and glides with tern-like wingbeats, but with more bounding and swooping (Bailey *et al.* 1968).

It is essential to point out, however, that all species of storm-petrel show variations in plumage tone and in the strength of the upperwing-covert bar, the appearance of these features being dependent on wear, moult and age (first-year or adult). Moreover, the pale primary-shaft bases exhibited by Swinhoe's should not be confused with the pale sheaths of growing flight feathers, nor with pale remex bases exposed by moulting upperwing-coverts; the latter phenomenon is common to many seabirds, such as dark-backed gulls *Larus* and Great Skua *Catharacta skua*, which can show an enormous amount of white at the base of the primaries and secondaries when moulting their coverts, although such areas are normally difficult to see on petrels in the field.

The following is based mainly on information gleaned from descriptions received. It is not considered to be comprehensive, or even necessarily completely accurate, and many of the characters given below will need to be confirmed by study of the species in its normal range.

Structure

Swinhoe's is a medium-sized storm-petrel, similar in size and structure to Leach's. The tail is forked, but less so than on Leach's, though this is normally of little use in the field. Of the Swinhoe's trapped in the North Atlantic, wing-length measurements averaged 161 mm (154-167; $n = 10$) and tail measurements 79 mm (73-83; $n = 9$). The ratio of wing length to tail length is 2.0 for Swinhoe's and 1.9 for Leach's, a difference of 5%. Swinhoe's may therefore appear relatively short-tailed or long-winged in comparison with Leach's. Swinhoe's may occasionally, when gliding, hold its wings out at right angles to the body and straighter than on Leach's, and this may increase the impression of a longer wing (further work is needed on this character and, if

found to be valid, to what extent wind strength affects this posture). Some descriptions also mentioned a slightly broader wing on Swinhoe's; this may become more apparent if the bird adopts the posture described above.

Plumage

Swinhoe's has a similar pattern to Leach's, but its plumage is browner and it completely lacks the white rump of Leach's, the most obvious difference between the two (but note that heavily worn Leach's may show a dark rump and thus appear similar to Swinhoe's). Although the greater-covert bar on the upperwing is less distinct than on Leach's, this will vary according to moult and the age of the individual concerned (adult Leach's in worn plumage shows a near-uniform upperwing at times, while the covert bar of first-year birds can be as noticeable as the white rump). Additionally, Leach's shows a greyish tint to the covert bar, whereas most descriptions of Swinhoe's state that the covert bar has a brownish or buffy tint, reflecting the differences in plumage tone; this may, however, be a result of different stages of wear, in which case some worn Leach's, which appear dull and brown, may also show a buffy tint to the upperwing-coverts and, conversely, some fresh Swinhoe's may show a greyish tint.

Swinhoe's exhibits five to six white outer-primary shafts adjacent to the primary coverts, which Leach's lacks. These shafts are normally visible up to 20 m away in good light with 10× binoculars; but exceptionally, in excellent viewing conditions, they can be observed at up to 250 m and be quite obvious at 75-100 m (V. Bretagnolle *in litt.*). Individuals moulting their upperwing-coverts will show more distinct shafts, but on the whole they appear rather inconspicuous. The underwing of Swinhoe's may look a paler grey or brown, but further research on this character is needed.

Flight

In strong winds, Swinhoe's resembles Leach's in having an irregular flight, bounding and swerving with intermittent deep tern-like wingbeats, but, unlike Leach's, after 'hanging in the wind', it swoops down and glides on, rather than shearing or dropping down to foot-patter over the water's surface. Its flight therefore appears more direct and less erratic than Leach's, with a quicker progression. This may be less evident in strengthening winds. In light winds, the flight of Swinhoe's is seemingly more confident than that of Leach's, with a few strong wingbeats and a dynamic bounding glide low over the water; Leach's tends to fly higher off the water and show a more steady flap-and-glide flight, although its wingbeats still appear wooden and jerky, and generally reminiscent of a nighthawk *Chordeiles* (A. McGeehan *in litt.*).

Moult

Little is known about the moult of Swinhoe's, but a bird captured in the Indian Ocean on 15th March 1964 was in wing and tail moult, with the three outermost primaries old, the rest new, and with feathers above the tail and on the belly in pin (Bailey *et al.* 1968). Cramp & Simmons (1977) stated that a

complete moult starts on arrival in winter quarters in November and/or December. Swinhoe's trapped at Tyneside in July were in fresh plumage, with one individual (on 23rd July) apparently just completing primary moult.

The timing seems similar to that of Leach's, adults of which moult at the end of the breeding season (July and August, but varying individually), starting with body feathers, followed by remiges and rectrices, and the birds will then appear relatively dull; the main period of moult appears to be October, continuing into December and, in winter quarters, to February, being completed by April. Juvenile Leach's appears relatively fresh in the autumn. Post-juvenile moult begins in April of the following year and is completed by October or as late as December; subsequent immature moults occur progressively later until adult (the early completion of moult exhibited by the Tyneside birds suggests that they may have been immatures).

Status, distribution and origins of Swinhoe's Storm-petrel in the North Atlantic

Most records of dark-rumped storm-petrels in the North Atlantic come from the northeastern sector (figs. 1 & 2), doubtless owing to the many observers present in this area; others are from areas of the warm Gulf Stream and Canary Current. Most records span July to October, and seem likely, bearing in mind the rarity of dark-rumped Leach's (see above), to consist entirely of Swinhoe's (fig. 3).

The succession of eastern North Atlantic records is reflected by recent extralimital records of seabirds inhabiting the Canary Current, principally Cape Verde Petrel *Pterodroma feae* (fig. 4). This is consistent with the hypothesis that Swinhoe's is present in the warm waters of two branches of the Gulf Stream: the Canary Current, which moves south; and possibly the North Atlantic Current, which moves northeast past Scotland, where a small portion intrudes into the North Sea, possibly explaining the occurrence of Swinhoe's there.

The relatively large number of records in the northeast Atlantic could be evidence of individuals dispersing from a breeding population in the Canary Current and moving north with Cape Verde Petrels. Such a population would have to be reasonably large to account for the number of records, although this could also be explained by the fact that Swinhoe's seems to be coastal in both its breeding and its non-breeding ranges. Work on the Selvagens, Madeira, has produced a number of possible breeding records of Swinhoe's Storm-petrel: in 1983, a single male was discovered on a nest of a Madeiran Storm-petrel *O. castro* in a wall (James & Robertson 1985); in 1988, a male was captured in a wall (Bretagnolle *et al.* 1991); and, in each year from 1993 to 1996, on a nest in a collapsed wall usually occupied by Madeiran Storm-petrels, a female with a vascularised brood patch (suggestive of breeding) was regularly caught by Dr F. Zino, who considers that Swinhoe's may nest in the Selvagens (F. Zino in Hagemeijer & Blair 1997). Of four Swinhoe's trapped elsewhere in the North Atlantic, at least three had a large but non-vascularised brood patch, although the latter is often shown by immature and non-breeding adult storm-petrels and does not, therefore, prove breeding.

The existence of a breeding population, although a strong possibility, is as



Fig. 1. Distribution in North Atlantic of trapped Swinhoe's Storm-petrels *Oceanodroma monorhis* (■), at-sea records of apparent Swinhoe's (●) and unidentified all-dark *Oceanodroma* species (★).

yet unproven. The records could also indicate that non-breeders wander around the warm waters of the North Atlantic and are thus not faithful to warmer waters farther south.

Origins of Swinhoe's Storm-petrel in the Atlantic

Since the Swinhoe's Storm-petrels now occurring regularly in the North Atlantic are inseparable from those breeding in the northwest Pacific Ocean (Bretagnolle *et al.* 1991; Cubitt *et al.* 1992; Dawson 1992), it has been assumed that they are recent arrivals in the context of the evolutionary timescale, and not an ancient relict population. Either way, this poses the question of how they entered the Atlantic in the first place.

The species' non-breeding distribution is still poorly known, but it would seem to include the warm waters of the northwest Indian Ocean south to approximately 12°S and east to approximately 80°E (Bailey *et al.* 1968). On current evidence, it is likely that Swinhoe's is present in the Indian Ocean from at least October to March.

The most likely route from the Indian Ocean into the Atlantic for this warm-water species is via South Africa. All other routes are improbable owing



Fig. 2. Distribution of trapped Swinhoe's Storm-petrels *Oceanodroma monorhis* (■) and at-sea records of apparent Swinhoe's (●) off northwest Europe.

to the vast distance that would have to be travelled and the unfavourable oceanography. Passage via the Red Sea into the Mediterranean, effectively overland and usually in unfavourable weather conditions, is unlikely to account for the large numbers of individuals recorded in the Atlantic, despite the record of a dead, emaciated bird found on 13th January 1958 on a beach at Eilat in the Gulf of Aqaba (Merom 1960) and three records from the Mediterranean (see list above).

A probable route is along the corridor of the warm westward-flowing Agulhas Current, which originates east of Madagascar and which, during the winter, is strengthened by the easterly airflow which predominates at that time of year. This current runs west to the Agulhas Bank off South Africa, whereupon it effects an anticyclonic turn¹, the Agulhas Retroflexion, back into the Indian Ocean, and eddies, measuring roughly 275 km at their broadest point at the water's surface, enter the South Atlantic (Gordon 1985).

1. Note that weather and oceanographic systems in the southern hemisphere rotate in the opposite direction to those in the northern hemisphere.

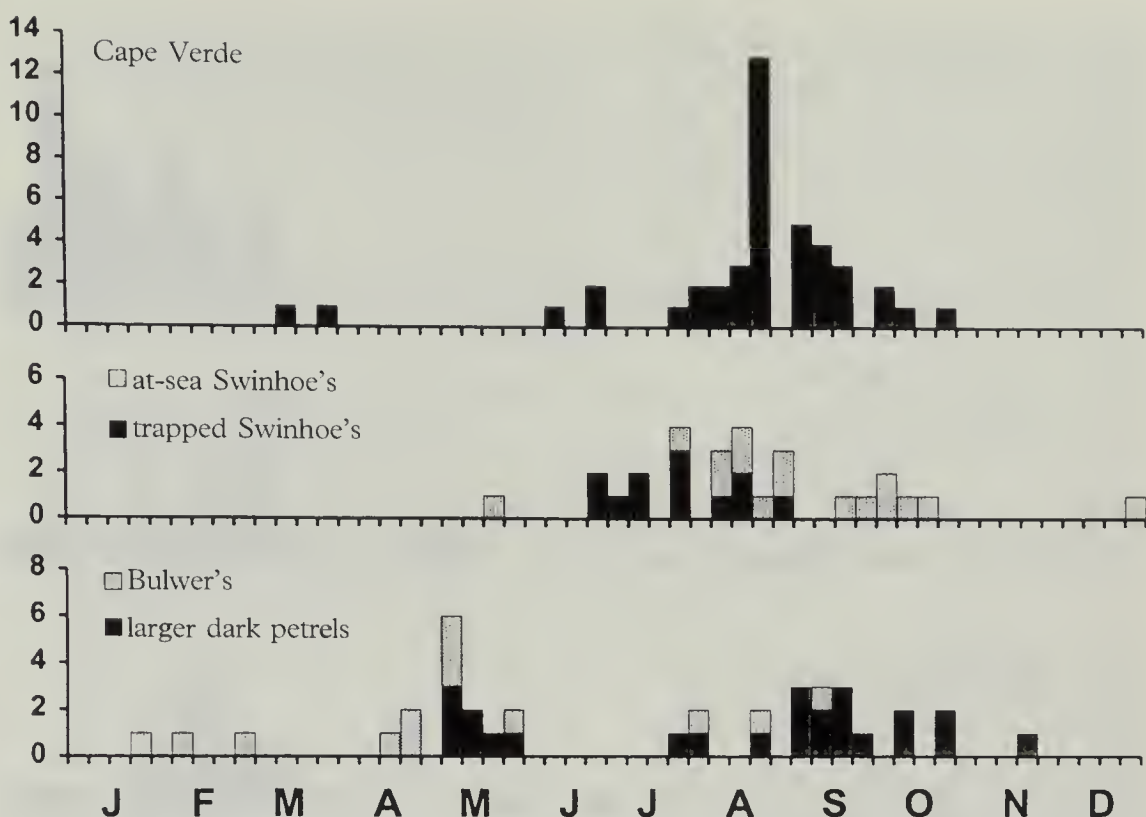


Fig. 3. Seasonal distribution of confirmed (trapped) and apparent (at-sea) records of Swinhoe's Storm-petrels *Oceanodroma monorhis* in North Atlantic, and of larger all-dark petrels, including confirmed Bulwer's Petrel *Bulweria bulwerii*, and presumed Cape Verde Petrels *Pterodroma feae* off western Europe.

This event provides Swinhoe's Storm-petrels with a corridor to the South Atlantic. There seems little to prevent their passage and they are, if anything, assisted not only by the warm current but also by the prevailing easterly airflow. The regular occurrence of this oceanographic event suggests that regular, albeit rather modest influxes of Swinhoe's are possible over a long period, whether past or present.

Records of a larger, unidentified petrel in the North Atlantic

The following four records involve a much larger species than Leach's or Swinhoe's Storm-petrels, and seemingly different from Bulwer's Petrel.

- 1988 ENGLAND Sea area Sole, 49.2°N, 7.5°W, c. 30 miles southwest of Scilly: one on 3rd August (P. Charles, K. Cutting, T. M. England, P. Harrison, H. W. Wallis, J. R. Ward, S. A. Young).
- 1990 ENGLAND Chesil Cove, Dorset: one at sea on 14th and 15th May, and presumably the same from 28th to 30th May (P. M. Harris, D. Holden, D. & G. Walbridge *et al.*).
- 1991 ENGLAND Prawle Point, Devon: one at sea on 27th and 31st May (P. Dennis).
- 1993 ENGLAND St Aldhelm's Head, Dorset: two moving east on 10th May (D. Burt, S. J. Morrison).

The 1988 individual, seen from the MV *Chalice*, has been adequately documented (Hume *et al.* 1997). The 1990 Chesil Cove bird is included in

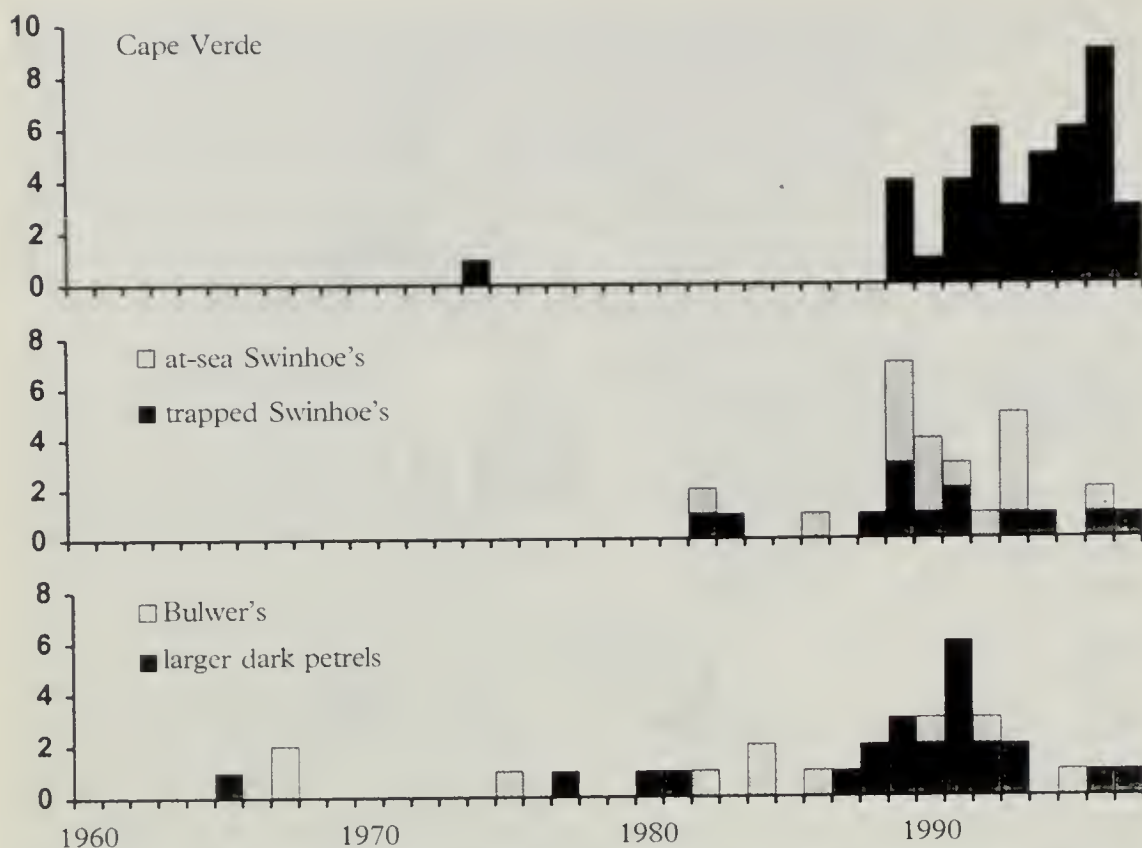


Fig. 4. Annual distribution during 1960-97 of confirmed (trapped) and apparent (at-sea) records of Swinhoe's Storm-petrels *Oceanodroma monorhis* in North Atlantic, and of larger all-dark petrels, including confirmed Bulwer's Petrel *Bulweria bulwerii*, and presumed Cape Verde Petrels *Pterodroma feae* off western Europe.

this group, as written descriptions received from the observers mentioned characteristics shown by the 1991 and 1993 individuals. Accounts of the last two follow.

SITE AND DATES Prawle Point, Devon, England. 27th and 31st May 1991 (presumed to be same bird involved).

OBSERVER P. A. Dennis.

WEATHER On 27th May, wind NE 3-4, visibility moderate/good; on 31st, NE 2, misty but visibility moderate. (Sea temperature 13-14°C [56-57°F] at Torbay.)

TIME AND DURATION OF SIGHTING On 27th, 07.00 GMT for ten minutes; on 31st, 09.00 GMT for 20 minutes.

DISTANCE $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ mile [400-1200 m].

DESCRIPTION (synthesised from observer's notes) Bird seen flying east at about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile on 27th May. Soon realised that we were looking at a large dark-rumped petrel. After 10 minutes it disappeared behind the headland. Bird seen again at at least $\frac{1}{4}$ mile on 31st May, flying east, occasionally chased, briefly, by gull. Watched for 20 minutes.

Structure: When chased by Herring Gull [*Larus argentatus*] on 31st May, appeared at least one-third the size. Wings broad, long, with rounded wing-tips, similar to a small, broad-winged raptor. Wingspan at least

twice length of body. Tail quite long and rounded at end, also quite slim in profile.

Plumage: Overall sooty-grey. No clear marking noted, e.g. no pale upperwing-covert bar visible (perhaps owing to distance, although paler grey areas were briefly noted on the bird but were thought at the time to be due to light reflection). 25× telescope used.

Flight/jizz: General flight seen on 27th May was slow, level and reasonably straight. No shearing or sudden change of direction. Just an occasional body-tipping as it flew low over the wave contours. Flight consisted

of long periods of flapping followed by short glides (ratio of 4-5:1). Wingbeats were quite deep and similar to those of Kittiwake [*Rissa tridactyla*] observed on the day. Wingbeats also looked more below the body. Wingbeats, a lot of the time, appeared quite rapid as it appeared to be hovering and dipping on the water. When seen on 31st May, bird first located higher off the water's surface (35-40 feet [c. 11-12 m]) being

chased by a Herring Gull, when it twisted and sheared with little effort on outstretched wings. This was repeated later at a greater distance. When the bird continued its normal flight, it flapped almost continuously with just two or three short glides. In normal flight, wingbeats quite rapid and deep as before. Also hovering and dipping near water's surface as before.

SITE AND DATES St Aldhelm's Head, Dorset, England. At least two east on 10th May 1993.

OBSERVERS D. Burt, S. J. Morrison.

WEATHER Wind ENE 3, generally overcast with good visibility, clearing from 09.00 GMT but with fog patches scudding off out to sea; visibility occasionally poor.

TIME AND DURATION OF SIGHTING First bird at 07.40 GMT, second at 07.51 GMT for four minutes (description based on latter, as well seen), possibly a third or one of former two seen briefly at 11.07 when apparently settled on water and lost to view.

DISTANCE Two-thirds of a mile [c. 1 km] (second bird).

DESCRIPTION Plumage overall appeared very dark sooty-brown. When the bird banked, a very brief flash of diffuse (grey?) pale was seen, but its exact location on the bird is not known. No other markings noted. 30× telescope used.

Flight very distinctive, reminiscent of a small Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*. Level and direct, with no veering, bounding, swooping or twisting and with slow progression over the water, interspersed with periods of flapping and gliding both of similar duration. Brief, vigorous banking seen only twice (which is perhaps why flash of diffuse pale was seen only once; perhaps part of upperwing-covert bar). Flapping loose, relatively fast, with between five and nine, mainly six, deep wingbeats reminiscent of sparrowhawk but with speed of flapping slightly slower and looser, lazier. On the whole, the flight was steady and

unhurried with slow progression, but easy.

Structurally a large bird, halfway in size between European Storm-petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus* and Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus*. Size approximates well with Merlin *Falco columbarius* (when first bird seen farther out, general structure could be assessed along with wing structure; European Storm-petrels at same distance appear as brief dots, with little to give idea of structure). Head not visible. Tail long and appeared blunt-ended, but the tail was not fanned at any point so a fork or otherwise would not have been visible if present. Wings long and relatively broad, exaggerating *Accipiter* jizz, and pointed. Little bend noted in the wings. General appearance was rather raptor-like, with long, relatively broad pointed wings and long tail particularly noticeable.

These descriptions are very similar to those given by Bailey *et al.* (1968) and Marchant & Higgins (1990) for Matsudaira's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma matsudairae*. Those authors stated that Matsudaira's is considerably larger than Swinhoe's, appearing long-winged and long-tailed in flight, with wings pointed, noticeably bent at the carpal joint and much broader-based than those of Swinhoe's (and other *Oceanodroma*), and with whitish shaft bases to the outer primaries forming a 'small whitish area near leading edge of upperwing, halfway between carpal joint and tip; visible to 75 m with 7 × 50 binoculars'. They also stated that it has a much slower flight than Swinhoe's, flapping and then gliding for a short distance: 'In calm conditions it usually has a slow, sluggish flight with very short glides, and, even in strong winds, its flight is quite slow . . . On occasions, however, even in calm seas, [Matsudaira's] was suddenly seen to change to an erratic twisting flight low over the water'; and 'Flight twisting with short glides, but occasionally

accelerate quickly, twisting low over the waves. Legs do not trail in flight. In 10-knot winds, gives 3-4 quick flaps followed by bounding glide, sometimes touching water at end of glide; longer periods of direct flapping flight also seen. (N. G. Cheshire).

Unfortunately, the similarity of the above descriptions of Matsudaira's and those of individuals from the south coast of England may be superficial, as shown by this report of two Bulwer's Petrels seen seven times between 16.00 and 20.00 hours off the Costa Brava, northeast Spain, on 29th April 1984 (Eigenhuis 1985):

'The sky was overcast and a moderate north-east wind blew At 16.00 I discovered two distant all-dark petrels flying slowly northwards. Shortly after a [European Storm-petrel] flying close by made me wonder whether the first two birds had just been too far away to see a white rump. However, when a second pair of these dark petrels followed, now at a shorter distance, I was certain that they really lacked a white rump. [They also] showed a strikingly long and thick tail, projecting far more than the head. Wings were long and narrow but seemed somewhat blunt-tipped. Wing-span was clearly less than that of Balearic Shearwater [*Puffinus mauretanicus*]. Their total size was comparable with Black Tern [*Chlidonias niger*] although bulkier. They were flying low above the water surface in a rather straight line without arcs. Their flight, with series of quick wing-beats interrupted by short glides, reminded me of [Eurasian] Sparrowhawk. They were progressing slowly, with Balearic Shearwaters flying about three times faster. A third pair of petrels passed close enough to demonstrate some grey across the upperarm. Up to my departure at 20.00, I noticed at least four more pairs of which the individuals flew 10-200 m apart.'

The most readily available description of Bulwer's Petrel in the literature is that given by Harrison (1987). 'Between storm-petrels and smaller *Pterodroma* petrels in size, with diagnostic long, wedge-shaped tail which is usually held closed and appears long and pointed. Plumage blackish-brown, except for paler diagonal bar across median coverts of upperwing (normally invisible over 250m range) . . . In flight, appears small-headed with long wings and long pointed tail, moving over ocean with buoyant twisting flight, wings held forward, weaving and twisting close to waves, rarely higher than 2 m before dipping into trough. Over calm seas flight often direct and purposeful, a few wingbeats followed by a short glide with wings parallel to sea surface.'

Descriptions of birds seen in England in 1988, 1990, 1991 and 1993 could, therefore, fit Bulwer's Petrel as well as Matsudaira's Storm-petrel. (It may also be noted here that the first of these, the 1988 '*Chalice* petrel', was initially identified as either Tristram's Storm-petrel *O. tristrami* or Markham's Storm-petrel *O. markhami*, and then as Matsudaira's; since the first two species were considered in detail by Hume *et al.* 1997, Young & King 1997 and Force 1997, they are not included in the present discussion.)

The moult period of Bulwer's Petrel is virtually unknown, but is presumed to occur on the wintering grounds, as wings found by M. J. & N. P. Ashmole on St Helena in February were in secondary moult (Dr W. R. P. Bourne *in litt.*), and Bulwer's Petrels captured in May in the Cape Verde Islands were in

fresh plumage (Murphy 1924). Other summer-breeding seabirds in the North Atlantic invariably have worn plumage by late summer or have started' moult, and this is likely to apply to Bulwer's as well.

Despite the lack of knowledge of the moult regime of Bulwer's, it is possible that the '*Chalice* petrel' (Hume *et al.* 1997) was a young Bulwer's Petrel in moult (Bourne 1997). This would account for the possible pale bases to the primaries (detected on some photographs), while moulted coverts might also expose pale feather sheaths on growing primaries, and the tail could appear forked if the central feathers had just begun to regrow. While W. F. Curtis has commented (*in litt.*) that birds seen in apparent tail moult in the South Atlantic had a short, square tail, this would also occur during a later stage of the moult when the new central rectrices were about half-grown.

The prominent white basal primary shafts, indicative of Matsudaira's, would not have been visible on the St Aldhelm's Head and Prawle Point petrels owing to distance, but the '*Chalice* petrel' was seen at close range and lacked these obvious field marks. Force (1997) mentioned that some Matsudaira's do not show a distinct white primary patch, and this could be the case with the '*Chalice* petrel'; but Matsudaira's observed by N. G. Cheshire north of Papua New Guinea in July and August, and thus presumably in moult, showed more prominent pale primary shafts than others observed off Australia in October (Bourne 1996). Therefore, if the August '*Chalice* petrel' was a Matsudaira's, it should have shown a prominent primary patch, as it, too, should have been in moult.

The wing and tail structures also suggest Bulwer's, bar the tail of the *Chalice* bird discussed above. The broad-winged appearance perceived by some observers and which suggests Matsudaira's may also be a character of Bulwer's in light winds, as it is with other petrels and, particularly, shearwaters (which appear more rakish and narrow-winged in high winds than in light winds, owing to the different flight manner adopted).

The flight of these four unidentified individuals, as described by the observers, lacks the *bounding* glide given by N. G. Cheshire for Matsudaira's in light winds, but is otherwise similar. It could, however, also fit Harrison's (1985, 1987) description of Bulwer's in light winds. In such conditions, the two *Bulweria* species do show a direct sparrowhawk-like or bat-like flight interspersed with level glides, as, indeed, do many petrels in calm weather with lack of updraughts. Either this has been poorly described, or it is rarely seen owing to the general absence of calm conditions or the pelagic nature of the species.

On the combined evidence, some of it circumstantial, the balance of probability seems to lie with Bulwer's Petrel rather than with Matsudaira's Storm-petrel. Until further work on the field characteristics of these birds is carried out, however, the above comments must remain conjectural. The fact that these birds have not been specifically identified may have more to do with lack of knowledge than with difficulty of separation.

It should be noted that the well-watched Chesil Cove bird was much as described above, but observers also mentioned the presence of a solid white patch at the base of the primaries. This was not restricted just to the primary

shafts, and was deemed similar to that of a skua (*Stercorariidae*) or European Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*. The bird was perhaps either a Matsudaira's with an unusually prominent wing patch but on which the observers failed to detect the tail fork, or a Bulwer's Petrel moulting its coverts and thus revealing the pale bases or feather shafts of the primaries, as reported by Warham (1996) for the Great Shearwater *Puffinus gravis*. The possibility of symmetrical albinism is regarded as too remote to warrant serious consideration.

Status and distribution of Bulwer's Petrel in the North Atlantic

This warm-water species breeds mainly on the Selvagens and in Madeira on the Desertas and the Porto Santo group, with smaller numbers in the Azores, Canary Islands and Cape Verde Islands. It is highly pelagic and normally occurs no farther north than approximately 43°N, but is a regular and not uncommon visitor to upwellings over the shelf-break west of Portugal (Paterson 1997), while J. W. Enticott (*in litt.*) reports that Joe Sheehan saw occasional dark petrels in summer off southern Ireland in the 1960s. In the non-breeding season, it apparently disperses to approximately 50°W and 40°S (Bourne 1995). The possibility of Bulwer's Petrel turning up in west European waters has been largely neglected in recent years.

Away from the species' acknowledged area of distribution in the North Atlantic, there are nine accepted records, mainly off Britain, Ireland and northwest Europe (fig. 5). These are marked with an asterisk (*) in the list below, which also includes other sightings of all-dark petrels apparently too large to be either Swinhoe's or Leach's Storm-petrels and showing a distinct flight pattern strongly suggesting Bulwer's. The timing of these records of unidentified large petrels fits well with that of known Bulwer's Petrels (fig. 3).

- 1837 ENGLAND River Ure near West Tanfield, Yorkshire: one dead on 8th May (Newton 1887).* [Note that this site, northwest of Ripon, is the correct one; Tanfield, west of Sunderland, Tyne & Wear, although widely quoted, is erroneous.]
- 1849 ENGLAND Scarborough, Yorkshire: one on unknown date (Higgins 1849).
- 1898 ITALY/FRANCE Between Corsica and Genoa: one on a lightship on 3rd June (Bourne 1967).*
- 1908 ENGLAND Near Scalby Mills, Scarborough, Yorkshire: one washed up on 28th February (Collinge 1922).*
- 1965 IRELAND Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork: one at sea on 26th August (Clements 1966).
- 1967 FRANCE Salin de Giraud, Camargue: two at sea on 12th May (G. Oreel, J. de Roever, P. Zwister).
- 1975 IRELAND Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork: one at sea on 3rd August (Alibone 1980).*
- 1977 FRANCE 10 km off Frontignan, Languedoc: one at sea on 17th June (observer unknown).
- 1980 ENGLAND Worthing, West Sussex: one at sea on 12th and 23rd May (B. J. Short, J. Newnham).



Fig. 5. Distribution of larger all-dark petrels (■), including confirmed Bulwer's Petrels *Bulweria bulwerii* (●), off western Europe and (inset) in northwest Mediterranean Sea.

- 1981 ENGLAND Mundesley, Norfolk: one at sea on 20th September (observer unknown).
- 1982 SPAIN Torremolinos, Málaga: one at sea on 7th February (Paterson 1997).*
- 1984 SPAIN Punta del Rio Tordera, Costa Brava: at least two at sea on 29th April (Eigenhuis 1985).*
- 1986 FRANCE Ouessant, Brittany: one at sea on 15th January (observer unknown).*
- 1987 ENGLAND Seaforth, Merseyside: one at sea on 19th September (observer unknown).
- 1988 WALES Strumble Head, Dyfed: one west on 13th September (R. H. Davies, G. H. Rees).
ENGLAND Meols/Moreton, Merseyside, one at sea on 9th October (observer unknown).
- 1989 ENGLAND Towan Head, Cornwall: one at sea on 23rd July (*Brit. Birds* 83: 78).

- ENGLAND Spurn, Yorkshire: one at sea on 9th September (*Birding World* 3: 27).
- ENGLAND Hornsea, Yorkshire: one north on 22nd November (G. Bennet, B. Richards).
- 1990 ENGLAND South Walney, Cumbria: one at sea on 17th April (Z. Dawson, T. Dean, A. Robinson).*
- FRANCE Leucate, Languedoc: one at sea on 28th April (Y. Kayser).
- WALES Point of Ayr, Clwyd: one west on 21st September (R. D. Corran, I. Higginson).
- 1991 ENGLAND Keyhaven, Hampshire: one at sea on 30th May (P. Chesborough).
- ENGLAND Hornsea, Yorkshire: one at sea on 8th September (T. Charlton, S. James *et al.*).
- WALES Porth Colman, Gwynedd: one on 24th September (observer unknown).
- NORWAY Ålesund: two seen from boat on 26th October (*Birding World* 4: 361).
- 1992 ENGLAND Seaforth, Merseyside: one at sea on 3rd September (A. J. Conway, P. Kinsella, T. Vaughan).
- WALES Point of Ayr, Clwyd: one at sea on 11th September (observer unknown).
- 1995 NETHERLANDS Westplaat, Zuid-Holland: one feeding on 21st August (*Dutch Birding* 18: 221-226).*
- 1996 SCOTLAND Lunan Bay, Tayside: one south on 12th October (*Birding World* 9: 376).
- 1997 FRANCE Sète, Languedoc: one at sea on 19th May (*Brit. Birds* 91: 38).
- ENGLAND Eccles-on-Sea, near Hempstead, Norfolk: one at sea on 12th October (*Norfolk Bird Club Bull.* 27).
- NETHERLANDS Camperduin, Noord-Holland: one at sea on 5th December (*Roy. Nav. Birdwatching Soc. Bull.* 138:11).
- 1998 ENGLAND Selsey Bill, West Sussex: one west on 14th July (T. Edwards *et al.*); seen later on same day off Ventnor, Isle of Wight (D. Swensson).

The recent surge in possible records of Bulwer's Petrel is similar to that for Swinhoe's Storm-petrel and Cape Verde Petrel (fig. 4). The above records certainly suggest that Bulwer's have accompanied those two species into northwest European waters. It would seem logical that, if one or two warm-water species from the Canary Current should occur off these coasts, then so, too, should more-common species such as Bulwer's Petrel.

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NOTES

Melanistic Black-headed Gulls

I agree with Rob Hume's editorial comment on Roderick Thorne's account of a presumed melanistic Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus* in Orkney (*Brit. Birds* 89: 570) that such melanism is rare among gulls. In ten years of active gull-watching, I have seen just two individuals which I believe were melanistic: both winter-plumaged adult Black-headed Gulls at Farmoor Reservoir, Oxfordshire. One, on 2nd March 1993, was very similar to the Orkney individual: the areas of plumage that would normally be white were sooty-grey, with the general effect and coloration of a Black Tern *Chlidonias niger*. The second, on 22nd December 1996, was much more distinctive: the upperparts were normal, apart from sooty black greater primary coverts, identical on each wing, and slightly lighter greyish-black uppertail-coverts and rump sharply demarcated from the rest of the plumage; the belly, flanks and vent were greyish-black, this colour merging gradually into the white foreneck and throat. This second individual caused consternation among the other roosting gulls, which appeared reluctant to let it settle with them.

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Reaction of other birds to melanistic Black-headed Gull

On 27th June 1996, I watched the melanistic Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus* described by Roderick Thorne (*Brit. Birds* 89: 570) when it was present on Stronsay, Orkney. I observed the gull at ranges down to 5 m as it followed a silage-cutter in the field next to our reserve, and there can be no doubt that it was not soiled in any way: its plumage was in perfect condition. Of particular interest, however, was the reaction of other birds. The melanistic gull was ignored by a flock of normally plumaged Black-headed Gulls while feeding among them, but on several occasions, after it had preened and rested following a bout of feeding, it caused total panic among all other birds present (including many Eurasian Curlews *Numenius arquata*) as it took to the wing. I assumed that they mistook it for a skua *Stercorarius*, as the pattern of melanism suggested Long-tailed Skua *S. longicaudus* and it displayed similar white wing-flashes to those of Arctic Skua *S. parasiticus*.

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Presumed melanistic Black-headed Gull

At about 14.00 GMT on 15th March 1998, at Cooling Marshes, Kent, I became aware of a constant state of panic among 3,000-4,000 Black-headed Gulls *Larus ridibundus* feeding on the grazing marshes. Looking for the cause of the disturbance, I noticed what I initially thought was a dark-phase Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus* flying among the gulls. Further watching revealed

that it was in fact a 'black' Black-headed Gull. My first thoughts were that it must have been extensively oiled, but the even tone and colour of the dark plumage and the symmetry of pale areas suggested that the gull was melanistic. I took a description and studied the behaviour of the bird.

Apart from some paler plumage areas, the gull was essentially black/charcoal-grey (hereafter referred to as black). It appeared to have a black hood as in normal plumage (although no brown tone was detected), this accentuated by a pale, almost white nape, shading to black towards the base of the hindneck and around the sides towards the throat. Mantle, scapulars, back and rump, as well as throat, breast and entire underbody, were evenly black, with no detectable blotching. The tail appeared all black from beneath; but from above, when spread on landing, the bases of all but the central tail feathers appeared to have pale webs (the effect not unlike that of a giant Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra*, though the pale 'patches', while perfectly symmetrical, were not so conspicuous). On both upperwings, the outer three or four primaries were dirty white/pale grey (similar to normal Black-headed Gull forewing), as were the marginal/lesser wing-coverts and the median primary coverts, producing a pale leading edge to the wing, broken by darker sets of feathers or dark feather bases. The pale forewing shaded into black across the median and greater coverts, secondaries and inner primaries. Both underwings showed slightly paler coverts contrasting with black primaries; the outer two or three primaries were whitish distally and tipped black. Legs and bill appeared black, with no red or reddish colour.

The gull's behaviour did not suggest that it was sickly in any way, which it might well have been had it picked up so much oil or 'pollution'. On the ground, where it superficially resembled a Eurasian Jackdaw *Corvus monedula* in plumage, it appeared alert, walked quickly and fed in typical fashion. It frequently flew, when it was as agile as any of the other gulls.

In the air, it looked remarkably like a small, dark skua (or, at times, like a Black Tern *Chlidonias niger*) and caused panic whenever it took flight. When it eventually landed, all the other gulls would remain 50 m or so away, thus forcing the aberrant bird to feed in total isolation; its attempts to join the flock always elicited the same response, and this continued all afternoon until the gulls left at about 17.15 hours to roost on the river. At times during the panic flights, two or three other Black-headed Gulls would chase or harass the dark bird.

An apparently melanistic Black-headed Gull recorded in Orkney in July 1996 (*Brit. Birds* 89: 570, plate 187) bears a very close resemblance to the Kent individual, except that the latter was much darker (black) on the neck, throat, breast and underbody. Interestingly, the nape was the palest part of both birds. It occurred to me that, if melanistic plumage can darken with age, the Orkney and Kent sightings might refer to the same individual, or that the two gulls could be genetically related.

M. J. ORCHARD

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Another melanistic Black-headed Gull

Roderick Thorne's note on a melanistic Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus* in Orkney (*Brit. Birds* 89: 570) prompts me to record the observation of a similar gull at Sefton Meadows Tip, Merseyside, on 19th March 1984. As with the Orkney individual, the normal plumage pattern was visible, although the general colour of the bird was a sooty brownish-grey. The hood was more or less the normal chocolate-brown colour and reasonably distinct, contrasting with a paler nape; the mantle was slightly darker than the rest of the body, while the tail was distinctly paler and more dirty grey in coloration. I did not note pale primary shafts, as shown by the Orkney bird. The bill and legs were very dark, with no obvious coloration. The gull soon flew off, and, like Rob Hume, in his comments on Mr Thorne's note, I could not rule out excessive soiling, especially on a bird seen at a landfill site, but the symmetry of its pattern strongly suggests that the gull was a true melanistic individual.

M. G. PENNINGTON

9 Daisy Park, Baltasound, Unst, Shetland ZE2 9EA



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Bird Illustrator of the Year: artists take note!

The rules concerning the dimensions of drawings are changing for the 1999 competition. Drawings already completed at the 'old' sizes (8.5 × 6.0 cm; 17.1 × 6.9 cm; and 16.95 × 16.8 cm or 22.6 × 22.4 cm) will be accepted for one year only, but the new rules (effective *now*) seek a set of four black-and-white illustrations as follows:

1. 19.5 cm wide × 6.75 cm deep, for reproduction at 13.0 cm wide × 4.5 cm deep
2. 9.15 cm × 9.15 cm, for reproduction at 6.1 cm × 6.1 cm
3. 6.0 cm × 6.0 cm, for reproduction at 4.0 cm × 4.0 cm
4. A vignette of any size (drawn half-up for reproduction at two-thirds), suitable as a 'decoration' within a printed page

Artists are also invited to supply an *optional* fifth illustration:

5. A painting, for publication in colour as the cover design for the BIY issue, measuring 22.0 cm wide × 32.0 cm deep, quarter-up, for reproduction at 17.0 cm wide × 25.0 cm deep (title will be added within top 4 cm, and there will be 3 cm bleed all around; artists should *not* include title or blank space for the title).

The inclusion or exclusion of a painting with the set of four black-and-white illustrations will not affect the judging for the title of Bird Illustrator of the Year. The artist whose painting is selected will also receive a prize of several T. & A. D. Poyser and Pica Press books of his or her choice.

The closing date for submission of the four (or five) illustrations is 15th March 1999.

'HBW' to sponsor BPY

We are delighted to announce that the *Handbook of the Birds of the World*, published by Lynx Edicions, will sponsor Bird Photograph of the Year in 1999. The winning photographer will receive the complete set (12 vols.) of *HBW* as his or her prize. The closing date for entries is 31st January (see rules on page 66).



REVIEWS

Nightjars: a guide to nightjars and related nightbirds.

By Nigel Cleere. Illustrated by Dave Nurney.

Pica Press, Mountfield, 1998. 317 pages; 36 colour plates; 119 distribution maps. ISBN 1-873403-48-8. £30.00.

This authoritative monograph, firmly rooted in museum work of exemplary comprehensiveness, covers all 119 species in the five families of the traditional order Caprimulgiformes. The introductory, thematic text (24 pages) is thorough and well written, directing the reader to a 700-reference bibliography for such curiosities as echolocation and hibernation. The illustrations are outstanding, revealing the artist's command of the finest of plumage details in the plates, and of 'jizz' in the line-drawings. Species accounts average 1½ pages, and seem well researched, summarising available information for the best-known species, and providing more or

less all that is known for others, including information never before published, such as certain calls. I would have appreciated sonagrams, as nightbirds have calls that are well suited to this much-maligned medium, and would be a valuable group for sonagram novices (like myself) to learn from. In addition, a brief profile introducing the most intriguing aspects of each species (such as how *Eurostopodus diabolicus* got its name) could have made for enjoyable reading. The complementary CD is not available at the time of writing; many will baulk at the extra £15, but it is a justified addition, considering a typical encounter with these birds.

ROGER SAFFORD

Photographic Handbook of the Wildfowl of the World.

By Malcolm Ogilvie & Steve Young.

New Holland, London, 1998. 175 pages; 718 colour photographs. ISBN 1-85368-625-5. £29.99.

This, the third in the excellent *New Holland* series, is an outstanding collection of photographs, including distinctive subspecies. Commendably, most photographs are of wild birds, and the inevitable captive ones are captioned in italic. There are some real gems, particularly the Crozet Pintail *Anas acuta drygalskii*, Madagascar Pochard *Aythya innotata* (a captive shot of possibly the last one ever to exist) and the Brazilian Merganser *Mergus octosetaceus*.

The main texts, each opposite a montage of photographs, are written in 'handbook style'. They describe the various plumages and continue with a brief summary of confusion species and comments on 'Distribution and Status', which often makes depressing reading. This is not a definitive book on wildfowl plumages, but as a unique collection of photographs of the World's wildfowl, it can be thoroughly recommended.

KEITH VINCOMBE

In Pursuit of the Peregrine.

By R. B. Treleven.

Tiercel Publishing, Wheathampstead, 1998. 256 pages; 20 colour plates; 30 line-drawings. ISBN 0-9532002-0-5. £29.50.

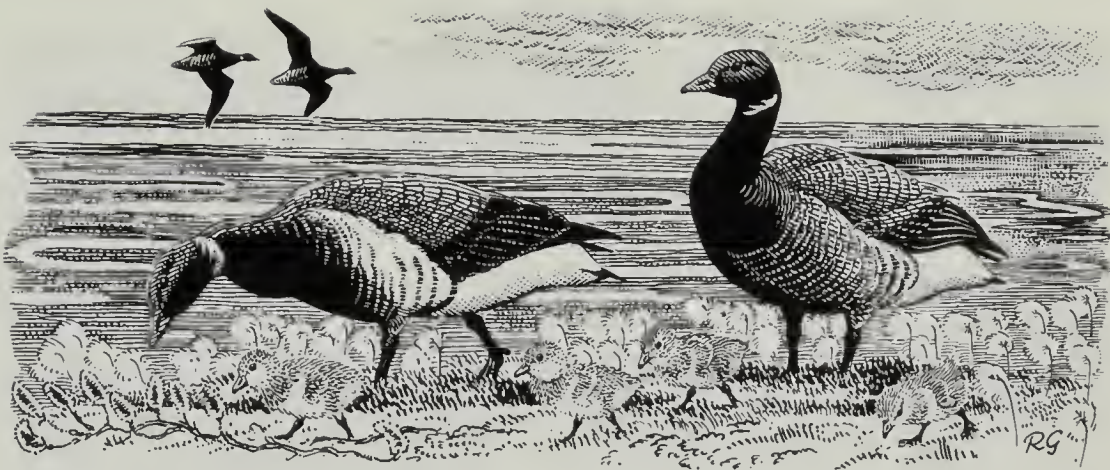
Dick Treleven has been watching Peregrine Falcons *Falco peregrinus* on the Cornish cliffs for nearly 50 years, and has spent long hours in observation at eyries, at all times of year and in all weathers. In consequence, he has seen much that the rest of us usually miss, including nearly 300 prey captures. This has given him an exceptional insight into the way that Peregrines live, their relationships with one another, and their individual nuances of behaviour.

The book comprises a mixture of cautious generalisations that result from years of experience and diary extracts that recount

particular events. We learn, for example, that Peregrines in Cornwall remain at their nesting cliffs all year around, that territory-holders which die are replaced just as rapidly outside the breeding season as within it, and that throughout the winter the females make most of the kills, their partners living mainly on the leftovers. Prey-caching is common, and occurs at all times of year.

The book is nicely produced, and the text is enlivened by many expressive paintings and line-drawings by the author. I enjoyed the book and learned from it.

I. NEWTON



Status of Brent Goose in northwest Yakutia, East Siberia

E. E. Syroechkovski, C. Zöckler and E. Lappo

ABSTRACT During June-July 1997, five colonies of Brent Geese *Branta bernicla* were visited in northwest Yakutia, East Siberia: three (total about 132 pairs) in the Olenyok delta and two (22 pairs) in the western Lena delta. Colonies varied in size from ten to 90 pairs. At all sites, both the nominate race *bernicla* and the race *nigricans* were found, the proportion of nominate varying from 15% in the east to over 95% in the west; eight mixed pairs were located, with five individuals showing intermediate characters. Ringing recoveries confirm the presence of two populations, one migrating to the Pacific coast of America and the other to northwest Europe. Populations of nominate *bernicla* and American *nigricans* are increasing, the latter also expanding westwards in Eastern Siberia, whereas the small Asian-Pacific population of *nigricans* remains in decline as a result of hunting pressure on passage and in winter. The discovery of mixed colonies of the two races counters suggestions that these forms should be treated as different species.

During several recent expeditions to Eastern Siberia, the status of the Brent Goose *Branta bernicla* was investigated. Although the species was still considered to be threatened in the 1980s in Siberia (Pozdnyakov 1987), recent studies indicate that the race *nigricans* (known as the 'Black Brant') is expanding its range westwards and that the nominate dark-bellied Brent

Goose *B. b. bernicla* is spreading eastwards. The status of *nigricans* in Siberia has been unclear, and the status of its Asian-Pacific population, in particular, remains uncertain.

Most of the results of these expeditions will be published in a later thesis (Syroechkovski in prep.). Since the conservation status of geese in Eastern Siberia (e.g. Syroechkovski 1995a; Madsen *et al.* 1996) is of more topical interest, however, some of the findings of the 1997 expedition to northwest Yakutia are published here. Recent proposals that the Brent Goose should be 'split' into three species (Stepanyan 1990; Millington 1997; Sangster *et al.* 1997) have generated additional interest, including discussion on the 'European Bird Net' (EBN; e.g. Inskipp and Sangster in April 1997).

Breeding distribution and population

The Brent Goose has a circumpolar breeding distribution along the Arctic coast and on islands in the Arctic Ocean. Only small numbers breed inland, for example at Lake Taimyr (fig. 1).

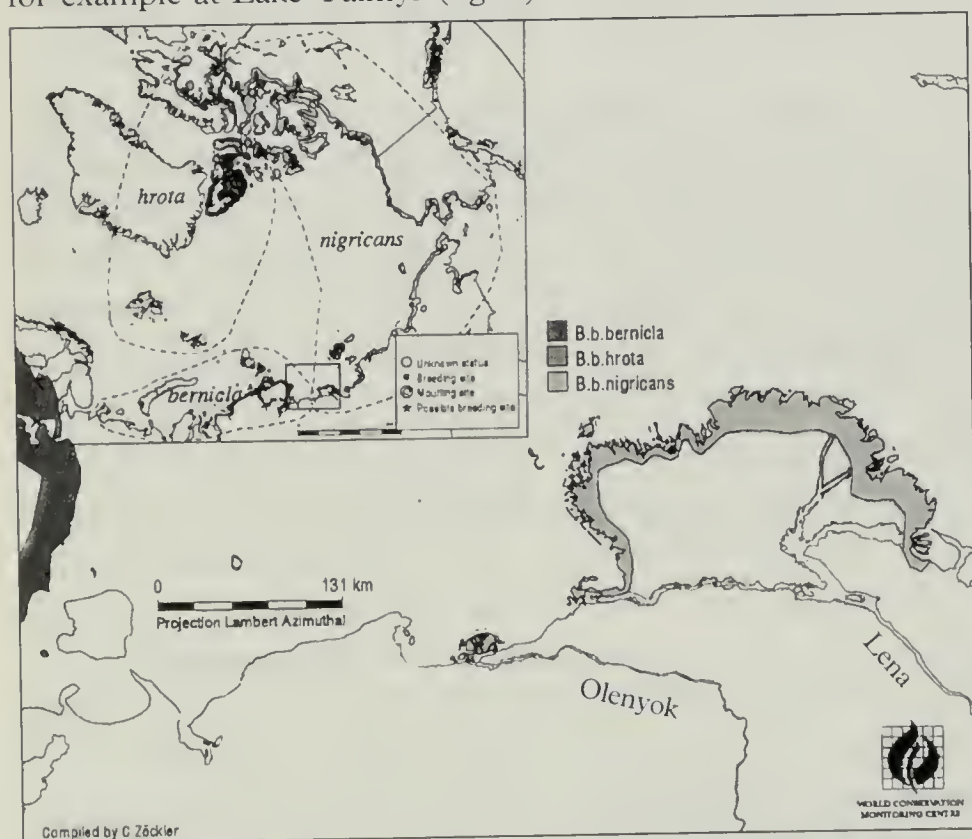


Fig. 1. Breeding distributions of races of Brent Goose *Branta bernicla* in Yakutia (with World ranges inset, study area marked by rectangle).

Exceptionally, a few stragglers of the dark-bellied nominate subspecies have been seen as far east as Faddeevskiy Island in the New Siberian Islands, at 75°50'N 142°30'E, but as yet with no proof of breeding (Syroechkovski 1995b). Until summer 1997, Taimyr was thought to be the eastern limit of the majority of this subspecies.

The race *nigricans* breeds throughout Eastern Siberia as far west as Olenyoksky Bay, at 73°22'N 118°25'E (Syroechkovski 1996). Two

populations of this race can be distinguished. One migrates to the Pacific coast of North America south to Mexico, where the wintering population is considered stable, and variously estimated at 114,000 (Madsen *et al.* 1996), 124,000 (Kokarev 1996) or 184,000 individuals (Rose & Scott 1994); the proportion of Siberian birds is unknown, but their numbers are probably increasing or stable. The second population is known to winter in Japan, China and Korea (Miyabayashi 1995), where it is estimated to number fewer than 7,000 birds, and is showing a trend of decline (Rose & Scott 1994; Syroechkovski 1995b; Madsen *et al.* 1996). The breeding area of this latter population is unknown, but colour-ringing at three different localities in the Olenyok and Lena deltas may help to shed light on its whereabouts.

The light-bellied race *hrota* breeds in northeast Canada, Greenland, Svalbard and Franz Josef Land, wintering on the Atlantic coast of the United States and locally in western Europe. It is not considered further here.

Study area and methods

The Olenyok, at 2,270 km Russia's twelfth-longest river, is not well known in the West and until quite recently had never been visited by ornithologists (Ilicev & Flint 1985). Müller and Chekanovski, who visited the river in 1873, focused mainly on botanical and geological features and did not publish any detailed information on birds (Müller 1882). The small delta of the Olenyok is situated between Taimyr and the Lena delta. Owing to its size, situation and habitat, Brent Goose colonies were expected (see fig. 1).

At the end of June 1997, we arrived at the Olenyok delta, and, in early July, proceeded east to the western Lena delta. Since access to most parts of both deltas is limited, only five colonies were visited. We counted the number of nesting Brent Geese and estimated the number of non-breeders. A special check was made on the status of the two subspecies, using published criteria for field identification (e.g. Millington 1997). Breeding Brent Geese were caught at the nest and colour-ringed. In addition, we gathered questionnaire data from local hunters and collected rings from geese shot in the area.

Results

In the entire Olenyok delta, we found three colonies on different islands, while local hunters and fishermen reported the existence of at least two more. All held breeding individuals of both nominate *bernicle* and *nigricans*. Sightings of geese in flight, along with a couple of recently preyed-on nests, indicated a wider distribution in the Olenyok delta. A further two colonies were found on the western Lena delta.

Colonies varied in size from ten to 90 pairs. All were situated in mixed colonies of Herring Gulls *Larus argentatus* (of the race *vegae*) and Glaucous Gulls *L. hyperboreus*. Although predation by gulls was noted, the Brent Goose seems to benefit from the gulls' defence against Arctic Foxes *Alopex lagopus*.

In the five colonies visited, we found a total of 154 pairs: about 132 pairs in the Olenyok and 22 pairs in the western Lena delta. The proportion of

nominate *bernicla* varied from 15% in the most easterly colonies to 95% in the westernmost; one colony consisted solely of nominate *bernicla*, but non-breeding *nigricans* were also present. The biggest colony in the Olenyok, with about 90 pairs, held both subspecies in about equal numbers. As a check on racial identification, particularly detailed observation was made of 87 pairs: of these, 43 (49%) were of the dark-bellied nominate race *bernicla* (plate 163), 36 (41%) were *nigricans* (plate 164), and eight (9%) were mixed pairs (plate 165) or pairs containing individuals with intermediate plumage.

Six American colour-rings and one Dutch ring collected from local hunters revealed the presence of two flyways and two populations mixing in the Olenyok-western Lena delta region. In addition, we marked 22 individuals (three *bernicla* and 19 *nigricans*) with two rings (green above white) on one leg and took their blood samples. On 17th October 1997, a Brent Goose of the nominate subspecies with this ring combination was controlled on Vlieland in The Netherlands (Spaans *in litt.*); it had been ringed on 5th July 1997, on a nest with five eggs, on the island of Maly Petrushka in the western Lena delta (73°03'N 122°21'E), and had therefore travelled more than 5,500 km farther than the longest distance previously known for migrating dark-bellied Brent Geese. It was accompanied in The Netherlands by another adult (presumably its mate) and a single juvenile, indicating a breeding success of 20%. Western European and American birdwatchers are requested to look out for this ring combination and carefully to check the subspecies on wintering grounds.

Of 58 nests examined, about 40% had already been preyed on. The manner in which down feathers had been left behind led us to believe that most were destroyed by human activity during egg-collecting. Owing to a peak in lemming numbers, there were fewer disturbances by foxes, hardly any of which were seen.

Discussion

Conservation

In the 1940s, the race *nigricans* of the Brent Goose was known to breed as far west as the east coast of Taimyr (Uspenski 1960), but expeditions in the 1990s reported no evidence of its still breeding in this area (Syroechkovski 1995b). Ringing recoveries from recent expeditions, including that in 1997, indicate a westward expansion of the range of this race and possibly an increase in its numbers. Both the dark-bellied nominate race and the American population of *nigricans* are increasing, whereas the small Asian-Pacific population of *nigricans* remains in decline. It is highly likely that the formerly more widely distributed Asian *nigricans* met and possibly overlapped with the nominate race in Taimyr, but that, during the 1940s, it declined and was reduced to a small population of fewer than 7,000 individuals in an as yet unknown part of East Siberia. At about the same time, the nominate race underwent a severe decline in numbers and for various reasons did not recover until the 1970s (e.g. Ogilvie & St Joseph 1976; Prokosch 1984; Nowak 1995).

The *nigricans* population which migrates to China, Korea and Japan along



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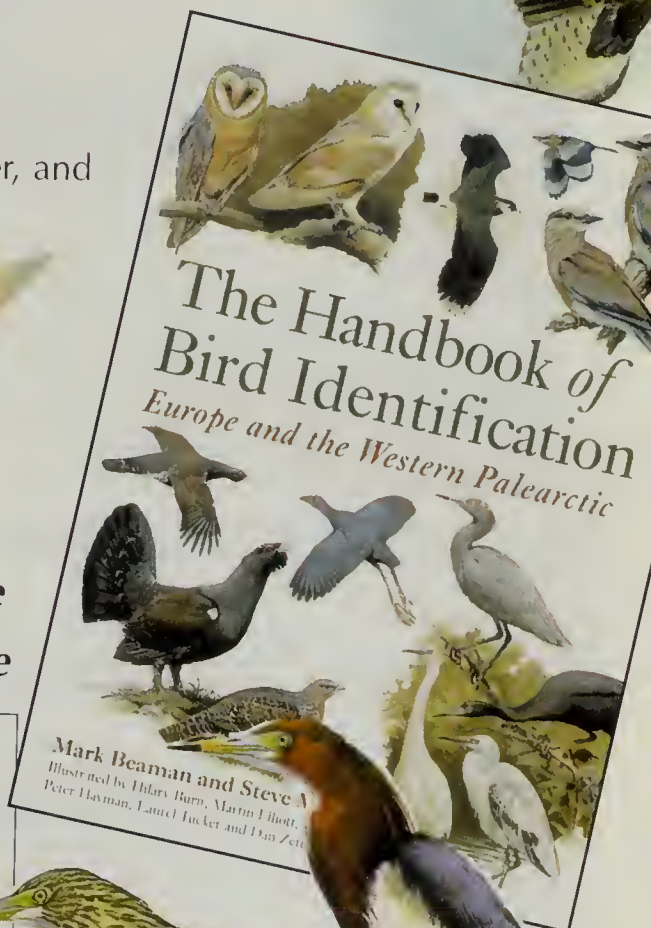
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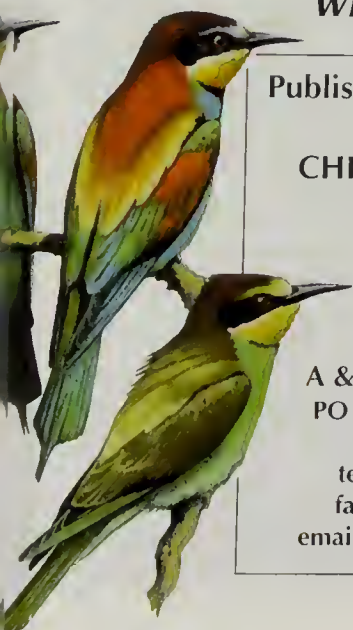
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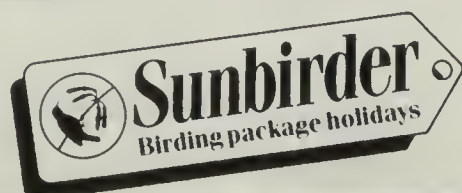
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the Lena and Yana rivers (Syroechkovski 1995b; Pozdnyakov *et al.* 1996) faces the same conservation problems as all other goose species of Eastern Siberia, the numbers of which are declining severely (Madsen *et al.* 1996). The principal reason for this has been described as overexploitation, mainly in China, where intensive hunting rapidly reduces the numbers of all geese (Xiaomin & Yongqing 1996). Ringing recoveries indicate that the recent westward expansion of *nigricans* in Siberia is probably due to North American 'Black Brants' migrating back along the routes by which they originally colonised the region. On these routes, they do not encounter the same threats prevalent in southern-central Asia, and so, despite the trend of other East Siberian geese (Madsen *et al.* 1996), this population of *nigricans* is increasing in numbers and range.

Although *nigricans* colonised the area probably over the last 25-30 years, it remains vulnerable in northern Yakutia. Increasing hunting pressure on arrival in spring and improved methods of egg-collecting are significant threats to this breeding population.



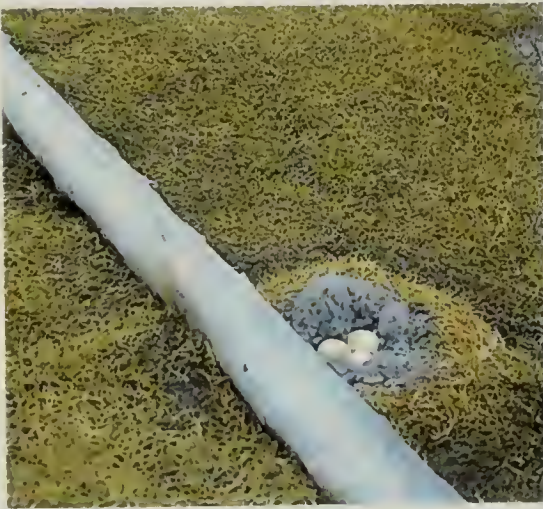
▲ 163. Female Brent Goose *Branta bernicla* of the nominate race near her nest in mixed colony of Herring Gulls *Larus argentatus vegae* and Glaucous Gulls *L. hyperboreus*, Olenyok Delta, June 1997 (Christoph Zöckler)



▲ 164. Male Brent Goose *Branta bernicla* of dark-bellied race *nigricans* defending nearby nest, with Glaucous Gull *Larus hyperboreus*, Olenyok Delta, June 1997 (Christoph Zöckler)



▲ 165. Pair of Brent Geese *Branta bernicla*, male showing characters of *nigricans* and female those of *bernicla*, Olenyok Delta, June 1997 (Christoph Zöckler)



▲ 166. Nest of Brent Goose *Branta bernicla*, as usual preferably placed near driftwood, Olenyok Delta, June 1997 (Christoph Zöckler)

Taxonomy

Despite some recent statements (Stepanyan 1990; Millington 1997; Sangster *et al.* 1997), the discovery of several mixed colonies of nominate *bernicla* and *nigricans* in northwest Yakutia casts considerable doubt over the validity of separating these forms into two different species.

The Biological Species Concept (e.g. Mayr 1996) is based on reproductive isolation of populations from others and a consequent absence of interbreeding. As pair-formation and mating among Brent Geese take place in the wintering area (Bergmann *et al.* 1994), however, it is not easy for different populations to mix, since they winter in largely separate areas (e.g. Western Europe and Pacific America). Interbreeding occurs only when immatures of different subspecies meet in the breeding area and subsequently migrate together to the

same wintering sites and form pairs. The situation at the Olenyok, with mixed pairs and intermediates forming less than 10% of the total, represents possibly a very recent stage of re-overlapping, re-mixing and re-interbreeding. Increased sightings of *nigricans* in Western Europe (van den Berg *et al.* 1984; Berrevoets & Erkman 1993; Millington 1997; van Dongen *et al.* 1997; Rogers *et al.* 1998) support the theory that more and more individuals of this subspecies are tending to change their migration route where they meet with Brent Geese of the nominate race. At least one observation of a hybrid, in The Netherlands, has been documented (Berrevoets & Erkman 1993).

During the history of the species, this overlapping of ranges and subsequent separation must have occurred many times as a result of glaciation or, more recently, hunting pressure or other factors, leading to the development of the present subspecies. The evolution of the Brent Goose into three species, even if at all incipient, is certainly not yet complete.

Acknowledgments

The expedition, in association with the Russian Academy of Sciences, is part of a joint project of the East European and North Asian Swan and Goose Study Group. We should especially like to thank the Japanese Association of Wild Geese Protection and the Swedish Club 300 for substantial financial support. Numerous Yakutian and other Russian organisations, especially the Yakutian Sakha Internord, provided enormous logistic support. We should also like to thank Tony Tree and Marcus Stensmyr for their help during the expedition.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Don't leave it until the last minute

The January issue is usually sent out very late. This is because so many people do not resubscribe until the end of December or, even, early January. Since we have to print address labels about one week before dispatch, late subscriptions delay the first issue. *Please help everybody by resubscribing at once.* Thanks!

The final jigsaw puzzle

This month, the final jigsaw puzzle in our exclusive four-puzzle set is available:

4. Female Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus* photographed by Nick Dymond.

Numbers 1-3 are also still available. Each one costs £24.99 (or £27.99 if outside the UK) from Jigsaws, British Birds, The Banks, Mountfield, Robertsbridge, East Sussex TN32 5JY.

Fair Isle correction

Paul Baker has asked us to point out that (contra *Brit. Birds* 91: 207) the island's Seabird Monitoring Officer is Stephen Turner.



LETTERS

Hybrid waterfowl in western Central Europe

Many papers have been written about waterfowl hybrids and a lot of information is available, but there is still great interest in the subject because of identification difficulties and possible confusion with potential vagrants (Perrins 1961—but still up to date!; Gillham & Gillham 1996, 1998) or the problems created by interbreeding (e.g. between introduced and natural populations, Delany 1993).

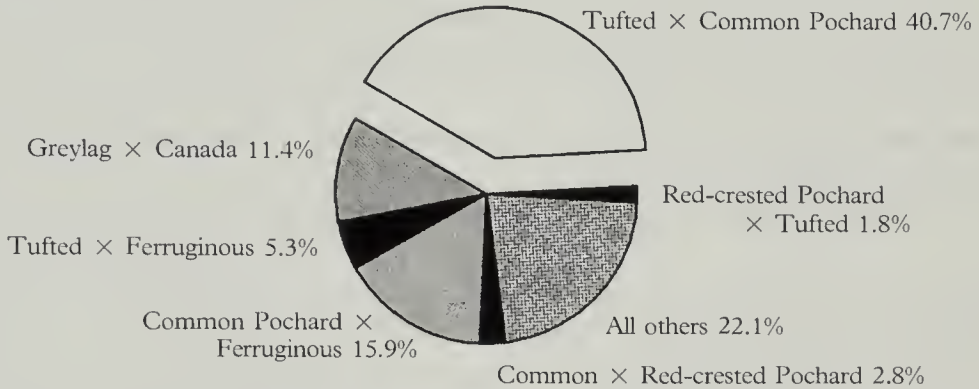


Fig. 1. Proportions of various reported hybrid waterfowl in Central Europe, 1960-97. Greylag Goose *Anser anser*. Canada Goose *Branta canadensis*. Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina*. Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*. Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca*. Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*.

The occurrence of hybrid waterfowl has as yet been studied only in restricted areas (Smallshire 1986; Schütt 1994). This communication summarises the first results of a study to survey occurrence and distribution of and relationship between different types of hybrids within a larger range, covering the westerly parts of Central Europe.

In 1996, I started a survey of waterfowl hybrids in Austria, Germany and Switzerland, gathering data from local literature, annual bird reports and local recorders. Now, it is possible to present the first results, although the survey is still in progress. More than 800 records of hybrid waterfowl observed in the wild have been collected. Fig. 1 shows that hybrids between Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula* and Common Pochard *A. ferina* make up the lion's share (over

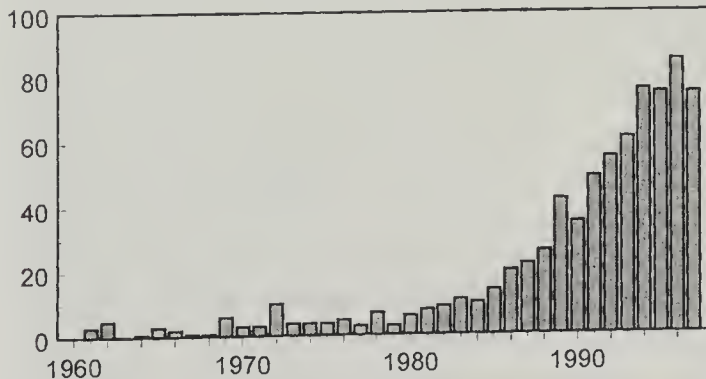


Fig. 2. Annual totals of hybrid waterfowl in Central Europe, 1960-97. There are also 23 records prior to 1960.

300 records). More than two-thirds of all instances involve the tribe Aythyini. Hybrids within this tribe seem to be mostly of natural origin, whereas a lot of goose hybrids originate from feral populations. The occurrence of hybrid waterfowl has been noted regularly since 1934 (Wüst 1935), but numbers have increased steadily since the mid 1980s (fig. 2). This increase is undoubtedly a reflection of birdwatchers' increasing awareness and, especially, improved identification literature (e.g. Madge & Burn 1987; Harris, Tucker & Vinicombe 1989).

Detailed papers about the occurrence of different types, identification and geographical distribution are in preparation, but the purpose of this preliminary communication is to draw attention to the study and to encourage the reporting and publication of relevant records, including any unpublished for previous years.

I wish to thank Dr J. Hölzinger for his support and for access to his library.

CHRISTOPH RANDLER

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Declines in bird populations are real

Ian Moorhouse (*Brit. Birds* 91: 330) suggested that the increasing average age of ornithologists involved in bird-monitoring could be responsible for the apparent 'long, shallow declines in so many bird populations'. No doubt his tongue was firmly in his cheek, but it is important to rebut the idea before it gains currency amongst those who would cast doubt on the evidence for the alarming state of bird populations in the wider countryside of Britain (Baillie *et al.* 1998; Crick *et al.* 1998) and many other parts of western Europe (Tucker & Heath 1994; Tucker & Evans 1997).

The clearest evidence that the apparent population declines are real is that they are overwhelmingly concentrated among birds characteristic of farmland;

in woodland, by contrast, losses are balanced by gains (Fuller *et al.* 1995). Given that ornithologists generally use sound to detect birds more in woodland than in open landscapes, one would have expected to have found the converse pattern had the apparent declines been mere artefacts of reduced sensory acuity of observers. (It is true that sight as well as hearing deteriorates with age, but spectacles are adopted at a relatively earlier stage than are hearing aids and are generally more effective.) Amongst species occurring on farmland, farmland specialists declined by 30% on average during 1968-95, whereas more generalist species increased by 23% on average; eight other ecological characteristics had no apparent influence on patterns of decline or increase (Siriwardena *et al.* 1998).

Problems of detectability bedevil most wildlife-monitoring schemes. One of the advantages of the current Breeding Bird Survey methods is that they incorporate 'distance sampling', so that systematic variations in detectability can be allowed for (Bibby *et al.* 1992; Greenwood 1996). Future analyses of population changes could, therefore, be absolutely robust against the effects of ageing of the fieldworkers.

Given that the age-structure of the human population at large is changing, we should expect parallel changes in the networks of ornithologists that are responsible for monitoring bird populations in many European countries. There are, however, other forces at work, at least in Britain: the 1997 survey by the Institute of Volunteering Research showed that the proportion of retired people engaged in voluntary work has increased in the last six years, whereas participation has fallen away amongst younger people. We should be grateful that the older members of the population are so willing to volunteer (and encouraging younger generations to emulate them), rather than cast doubts on the quality of the work they do.

JEREMY J. D. GREENWOOD (aged 56^{1/4})

British Trust for Ornithology, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU

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Sonagrams

I was interested to read Dr David Parkin's review of the *Concise Edition of the Birds of the Western Palearctic* (*Brit. Birds* 91: 256-257), but concerned that he saw fit to comment: 'gone are all those sonagrams (did any birder understand them anyway?)'. The value of sonagrams for serious research is well established, but publication should not be just in esoteric publications, for sonagrams can be of great value to the average birdwatcher who takes the trouble to read the simple explanations which are usually provided.

I should hate to think that my nearly 50 years of wildlife sound-recording and its conversion into sonagrams had been of so little use.

ERIC SIMMS

21 Church Street, South Witham, Grantham, Lincolnshire NG33 5PJ

Cambridge Bird Club's age

The statement in August's 'News and comment' (*Brit. Birds* 91: 358) that the Cambridge Bird Club's 75th birthday occurs in the year 2000 was unduly modest. While a Cambridge Ornithological Society was founded in 1925, it was soon pointed out that a Cambridge Bird Club had been founded in 1905—to perpetuate the famous receptions held by Professor Alfred Newton FRS—but had lapsed during, and had not been revived after, the First World War. The two were, therefore, united under the earlier name, and a 50th Anniversary Dinner, addressed by Sir Peter Scott, was held on 25th November 1955.

W. R. P. BOURNE

Department of Zoology, University of Aberdeen, Tillydrone Avenue, Aberdeen AB9 2TN

EDITORIAL COMMENT Dr Robin Cox, President of the CBC, has commented that the Club was 'founded under its modern constitution in 1925 . . . We therefore consider it fit and proper that we should celebrate its 75th Anniversary in the year 2000 . . . We have no intention of waiting until 2005, when some of us may no longer be around to enjoy the celebrations!'

Thus, the CBC has a marvellous opportunity to have twice as many binges as other similar organisations. We at *BB* did celebrate our 75th anniversary in 1982 (*Brit. Birds* 75: 241-242, 431), and look forward to our centenary in 2007, but missed the chance in 1993 of celebrating the 150th anniversary of the formation of *The Zoologist* (since Dr Bourne reminded us too late: *Brit. Birds* 88: 1-4).



NEWS AND COMMENT

Compiled by Bob Scott and Wendy Dickson

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

British Birdwatching Fair — the fringe

Many words have been written on the Rutland fair, and no doubt many more will be written in the months (and years) to come. If you have yet to experience a visit to the British Birdwatching Fair, you can have no idea what you have been missing, and we strongly recommend that you put matters right as soon as possible.

This year, the Fair was declared open by HRH The Fon of Oku. (Fon is the title of the local king/chief in Cameroon.) Those present at the opening ceremony were impressed with his grasp of the conservation problems in the Kilum Ijim Forest, home of Bannerman's Turaco *Tauraco bannermani*, one of the World's endangered species which has benefited from this year's Fair. We were very honoured to entertain the Fon for two days before the Fair, and escorted him to two RSPB reserves to see active woodland management (Stour Estuary and Wood, Essex) and extensive visitor facilities

(Minsmere, Suffolk) (plate 167). The Fon is a very shrewd politician and is well aware of the problems of the forest and his people. His challenge is to balance the environmental needs with the demands of a growing human population. We rather suspect that he has the skills and ability to do it. BirdLife International's project in the area obviously helps. We asked him about Bannerman's Turaco: 'Ah yes!', he replied, 'We have at least one in the palace grounds.' We are tempted to take up his offer of a visit.

In contrast, we provided accommodation during the Fair for the three volunteers from BirdLife Malta. They were visiting to man the Malta stand and generate some interest in the conservation problems on the island. At the end of each tiring day on the stands, when by rights we should have been in bed fast asleep, we talked through Malta's conservation problems and what if anything



▲ 167. HRH Fon Samuel Ngum III of Oku with Bob Scott (left) at Minsmere RSPB Reserve, Suffolk, August 1998 (Ann Scott)

can be done. Here in the UK, we are so fortunate to work in a political climate that is generally supportive of wildlife and conservation; in Malta, they have massive problems. At the time of writing, they are approaching national elections, and every major party that may win or have influence has declared itself in favour of hunting. Hunting that has wiped out so much of Malta's wildlife. If ever there was a conservation body that needs our help, it is

in Malta. A mere £13 will secure membership, and provide moral as well as financial support.

The next British Birdwatching Fair will be held at Rutland Water during 20th-22nd August 1999 (tel. 01572 771079); details of the Kilum-Ijim Forest Project, Cameroon, are available from BirdLife International (tel. 01223 277318); to become a member of BirdLife Malta, write to PO Box 498, M-Valletta, CMR01, Malta.

Aliens in our midst

According to the Environment Agency's River Habitat Survey, one in four UK rivers and streams has been colonised by invasive alien weeds which are threatening native wildlife. Highlighted in its report, *River Habitat Quality: the physical character of rivers and streams in the UK and Isle of Man*, are three particular species: Indian Balsam *Impatiens glandulifera*, Japanese Knotweed *Reynoutria japonica* and Giant Hogweed *Heracleum mantegazzianum*. Introduced as ornamental plants in the nineteenth century, they have since become widely established throughout Britain, particularly along river banks where their dense foliage displaces native plants, may reduce habitat value for wildlife and is said to cause riverbank erosion.

SBC's silver jubilee

Founded at a meeting in Lerwick in December 1973, the thriving Shetland Bird Club is 25 years old this month. We send the Club our congratulations.

News of former YOY

Since his award as senior Young Ornithologist of the Year in 1994 (*Brit. Birds* 87: 603-604; 88: 164, plate 39), Steve Votier has been kept busy. Having completed his BSc honours degree in biology at Newcastle University in 1995, he then spent three exciting 'fall' months at Long Point Bird Observatory, followed in 1996 by working as Assistant Warden at Fair Isle Bird Observatory. Spring 1997 saw him undertaking contract work for the RSPB, monitoring upland wader populations in Northumberland. This year, based at Glasgow University, he has just completed the first of three field seasons in Shetland (mainly Hermaness and Noss) for a PhD, looking at the feeding ecology of the Great Skua *Catharacta skua*.

Earlier than first

We said (*Brit. Birds* 91: 302) that *The Calf of Man Bird Observatory Annual Report for 1997* and the *Filey Brigg Bird Report 1997* were the first two annual reports to reach us, both in early April 1998. We apologise for overlooking the fact that we had received *Colwick Park Wildlife 1997* on 18th March 1998. The Colwick Park report is available for £3.50 (incl. p&p) from M. G. Walker, 14 Ramblers Close, Colwick, Nottingham NG4 2DN.

When and where do butterflies fly?

Any lepidopterist who likes to see records displayed on maps and in histograms or graphs will delight in *Butterfly Conservation's 56-page Hertfordshire and Middlesex Butterfly and Moth Report for 1997*. It costs £3.50 (incl. p&p), and the 1996 *Report* is also available (£2.00 incl. p&p), from John C. Stevens, 3 Scarborough Road, London N9 8AT.

Bird observatories

If you are planning a trip to Australia, it is well worth fitting in a visit to one of the bird observatories.

Contact addresses are:

BARREN GROUNDS B.O. PO Box 3, Jamberoo NSW 2533; phone (02) 4236 0195; fax. (02) 4236 0537; email barren.grounds@bigpond.com

BROOME B.O. Crab Creek Pond, PO Box 1313, Broome, WA 6725; phone (08) 9193 5600; fax. (08) 9192 3364; email bbo@tpgi.com.au

EYRE B.O. c/o Cocklebidy, Norseman, WA 6443; phone (08) 9039 3450; fax. (08) 9039 3440.

ROTAMAH ISLAND B.O. PO Box 75, Paynesville, Victoria, Australia 3880; phone/fax. (03) 5156 6398.

Scotland in 1996

With a scattering of the best artwork from the Scottish local bird reports to break up the text and enhance the appearance, the 29th *Scottish Bird Report*, covering 1996, runs to 76 pages, all absolutely crammed with interesting records. Major rarities are assessed by the British Birds Rarities Committee; 140 records of intermediate rarities were considered by the Scottish Bird Records Committee; and the lesser rarities are assessed by local records committees.

To pick out a few highlights at random: a pair of Yellow Wagtails *Motacilla flava* of the grey-headed race *thunbergi* nested on Fair Isle, fledging four young on 17th July; Siberian warblers included 12 Pallas's Leaf *Phylloscopus proregulus*, about 105 Yellow-browed *P. inornatus* and four Radde's *P. schwarzi* (in contrast, there were only two Firecrests *Regulus ignicapillus*, one in October and one in December); and European Nuthatches *Sitta europaea*

reached a new peak of 18 pairs and nine singles, with seven 'known or likely breeding sites' listed. There are also two short papers, one describing Scotland's first *Pterodroma*, probably Cape Verde Petrel *P. feae*, seen by Richard W. White at sea from the RRS *Charles Darwin* in sea area Fair Isle on 25th June, and the other providing a review of the status of the Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius* in Scotland, by R. D. Murray, from the first known occurrences in 1894 up to the 1996 peak of 21 individuals and two breeding records, the sixth and seventh ever.

This excellent *Report*, edited by Ray Murray, published by The Scottish Ornithologists' Club, and with its very distinctive Scotland-made-of-bird-names cover, is free to SOC members and is on sale to non-members for £4.50, from 21 Regent Terrace, Edinburgh EH7 5BT.

Photographs of *Sylvia* warblers

High-quality photographs of the following birds in the field or in the hand are needed for a forthcoming monograph on the *Sylvia* warblers by Hadoram Shirihi, Gabriel Gargallo and Andreas Helbig, illustrated by Alan Harris and with photographs by David Cottridge: Tristram's Warbler *Sylvia deserticola*, Ménétries's Warbler *S. mystacea* (mainly the races *mystacea* and *turcmenica*), Rüppell's Warbler *S. rueppelli* (juvenile), Cyprus Warbler *S. melanothorax* (juvenile), Desert Warbler *S. nana* of the North African race *deserti*, Arabian Warbler *S. leucomelaena* of south Arabian and East

African forms, Orphean Warbler *S. hortensis* of the nominate race, Barred Warbler *S. nisoria*, Lesser Whitethroat *S. curruca* of the southeastern forms *althaea* and *minula*, and the 'Afro-Sylvias' ('*Parisoma*') including Rufous-vented Warbler *S. subcaeruleum*, Banded Warbler *S. boehmi*, Layard's Warbler *S. layardi*, Yemen Warbler *S. buryi* and Brown Warbler *S. lugens*.

Photographers will receive full credit and a fee for any of their photographs used. Please send photographs as soon as possible to D. M. Cottridge, 6 Sutherland Road, Tottenham, London N17 0BN.

Knockdown pish

A migration hot-spot. A day with a fall. A small passerine zips by, just overhead, and is gone for ever. Hang on! Maybe it could have been stopped in mid flight.

Peter Dunne suggests that 'Pishing not only draws hidden birds out, it often prompts passing birds to take cover. A single, explosive "pewsh" note, [or] better still a two-note "pew-pew", is bird Esperanto for "Look out!" . . . sometimes, after an evasive dive, . . . they perch to see what all the fuss is about. You are no worse off if they continue on, and much better off if they fall for your trick' (*Birding* 30: 333).

Bullock's

Identification of those recently re-split Nearctic orioles—Bullock's *Icterus bullockii* and Baltimore *I. galbula*—is discussed thoroughly by Cin-Ty Lee and Andrew Birch in well-illustrated articles in the August 1998 issue of *Birding* (30: 282-295, 296-298).

Birding is published bimonthly by the American Birding Association. Enquiries concerning membership (\$45 outside USA) to PO Box 6599, Colorado Springs, CO 80934, USA.



MONTHLY MARATHON



The bird in the seventh stage (plate 110) was identified as a wheatear *Oenanthe* by everyone, and most entrants (87%) correctly named it as Red-tailed *O. xanthopyrma* (it was photographed by Colin Richardson in the United Arab Emirates in November 1989). The relatively long bill obviously misled those competitors who misidentified it as Hooded *O. monacha* (9%), while a few plumped for Mourning *O. lugens* or Isabelline *O. isabellina* (2% each).

The current race leaders are Jens Lind, Steve Mann, Dave Nurney, Jakob Sunesen and Peter Sunesen (all with a sequence of seven consecutive correct answers), Jørgen Munck Pedersen and Jean-Yves Peron (both with six) and Volker Konrad, Peter Lansdown and Steve Preddy (each with five).

When one competitor is ahead of all the rest of the field, with a sequence of at least ten consecutive correct answers, he will win the prize of a SUNBIRD birdwatching holiday in Africa, America or Asia. Previous winners have been Pekka Nikander, Anthony McGeehan, Ralph Hobbs, Martin Helin, Hannu Jännes, Paul Archer, Peter Sunesen, Anthony McGeehan (the only two-time winner so far) and David McAdams.

For a free SUNBIRD brochure, write to PO Box 76, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 1DF, or telephone 01767 682969.



▲ 168. 'Monthly marathon.' Photo no. 148. Ninth stage in tenth 'Marathon'. Identify the species. Read the rules (*Brit. Birds* 91: 305), then send in your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th January 1999.



RECENT BBRC DECISIONS



This monthly listing of the most recent decisions by the British Birds Rarities Committee is not intended to be comprehensive or in any way to replace the annual 'Report on rare birds in Great Britain'. The records listed are mostly those of the rarest species, or those of special interest for other reasons. All records refer to 1998 unless stated otherwise.

ACCEPTED: **Squacco Heron** *Ardeola ralloides* Pensthorpe (Norfolk), 26th April to 5th May. **Great White Egret** *Egretta alba* Stiffkey Fen (Norfolk), from December 1997 to 29th March; Dorman's Pool and Haverton Hole (Cleveland), 17th-18th April. **King Eider** *Somateria spectabilis* South Oare and Hartlepool Headland (Cleveland), 4th July. **Gyr Falcon** *Falco rusticolus* North Uist (Western Isles), 12th March to 16th April. **Alpine Swift** *Tachymarptis melba* Chew Valley Lake (Avon), 18th February; Budworth Mere (Cheshire), 4th March; March (Cambridgeshire), 5th March; Start Point (Devon), 13th May; Wilstone Reservoir (Hertfordshire), 27th May. **Red-rumped Swallow** *Hirundo daurica* Bosheston Ponds (Pembrokeshire), at least 20th-23rd February; Hengistbury Head (Dorset), 26th February; Lodmoor (Dorset), 25th April; Skateraw (Lothian), 30th May. **Penduline Tit** *Remiz pendulinus* Titchwell, 1st January to 4th April.

M. J. Rogers, Secretary, BBRC, 2 Churchtown Cottages, Towednack, St Ives, Cornwall TR26 3AZ



RECENT REPORTS

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary of unchecked reports covers 12th October to 8th November 1998.

Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps* Bryher (Scilly), 28th-30th October. **Black Duck** *Anas rubripes* Stithian's Reservoir (Cornwall), 29th October to 8th November. **Lesser Scaup** *Aythya affinis* three (one male, two females), Loch of Spiggie (Shetland), 1st-5th November; Islay (Strathclyde), 7th-8th November. **Great Bustard** *Otis tarda* Broadstone (Dorset), 1st November. **Long-billed Dowitcher** *Limnodromus scolopaceus* Ballycotton (Co. Cork), and two at The Cull (Co. Wexford) in late October. **Terek Sandpiper** *Xenus cinereus* Findhorn Bay (Grampian), 29th-30th October; Ardmere Point (Strathclyde), 31st October. **Franklin's Gull** *Larus pipixcan* Eglwys Nunydd Reservoir (West Glamorgan), 28th October to 1st November. **Short-toed Lark** *Calandrella brachydactyla* Malin More (Co. Donegal), 19th-28th October. **Horned Lark** *Eremophila alpestris* Large influx, including up to 100 at Waxham, up to 80 at Holkham Bay and 60 at Salthouse (all Norfolk) from mid to late October. **Olive-backed Pipit** *Anthus*

hodgsoni St Mary's (Scilly), 20th-23rd October. **Grey Catbird** *Dumetella carolinensis* on board QEII in Southampton Docks (Hampshire), 21st October, remained on board. **Red-flanked Bluetail** *Tarsiger cyanurus* St Margaret's at Cliffe (Kent), 18th-19th October. **White's Thrush** *Zoothera dauma* Found dead, Ormiston (Lothian), 12th October; North Tolsta, Lewis (Outer Hebrides), about 14th-27th October. **Hermit Thrush** *Catharus guttatus*, Galley Head (Co. Cork), 25th-26th October. **Fieldfare** *Turdus pilaris* Big influx on East Coast in early November, including 20,000 at Brancaster (Norfolk) on 5th November. **American Robin** *T. migratorius* St Agnes (Scilly), 26th-28th October. **Dusky Warbler** *Phylloscopus fuscatus* Bamburgh (Northumberland), 4th-6th November; Abbotsbury Swannery Reserve (Dorset), 4th-7th November. **Red-eyed Vireo** *Vireo olivaceus* Helston Loe Pool (Cornwall), 3rd-8th November. **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** *Phaethon rubricauda* Bryher, 30th October to 1st November.



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CORRECTIONS

VOLUME 90

- 321 'Shirihai 1996' should read 'King & Shirihai 1996' (the reference on page 324 should also be amended, by the insertion of 'KING, J., &').
- 473 Plate 159. Bird at extreme left is a Little Gull *Larus minutus*.
- 545 Plate 197. Cornwall (not Devon).

VOLUME 91

- 132 Tree Sparrow. Table 1. For 15 million, read 1.5 million for Sweden.
- 394 'Sabine's Gulls in western France and southern Britain'
Owing to a misunderstanding, the area with angled shading, denoting where there have been recent observations of offshore concentrations of Sabine's Gulls *Larus sabini*, was misplaced in fig. 2 on page 394. This map now shows the correct position. We apologise to readers and to the authors, Norman Elkins and Pierre Yésou.

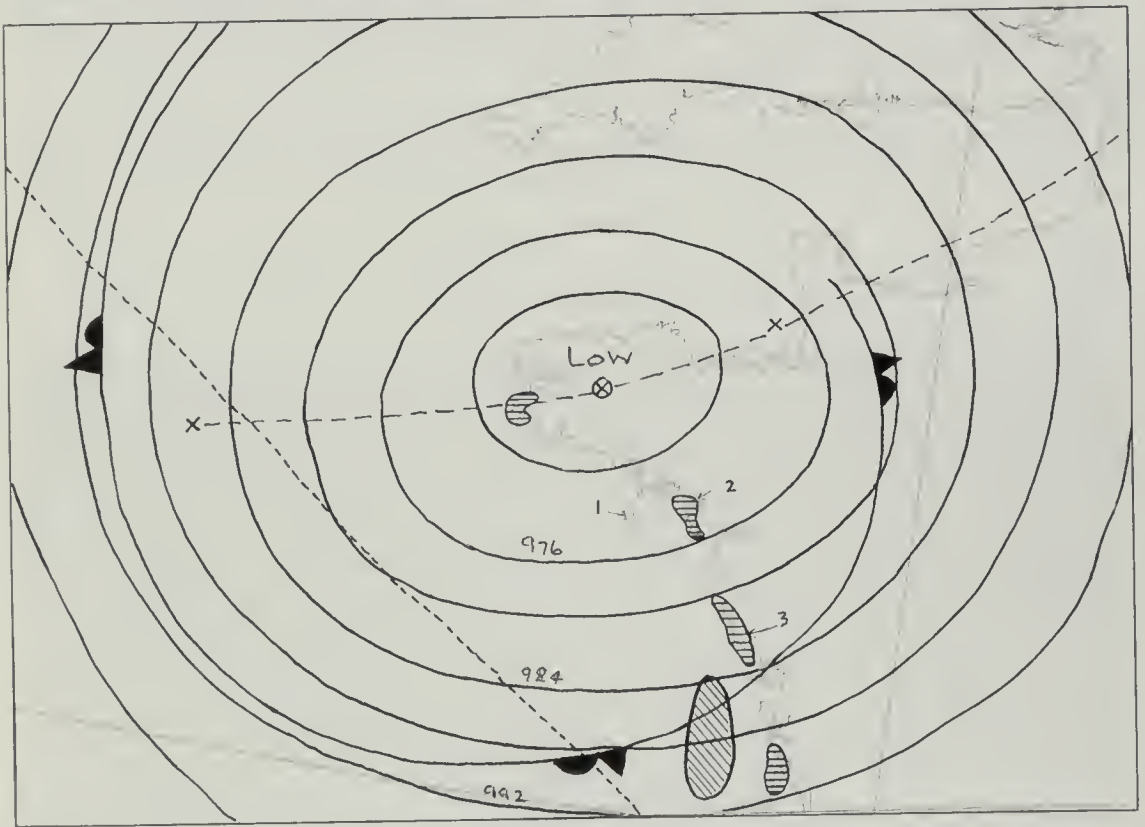


Fig. 2. Synoptic chart for 06.00 UT on 13th September 1993.
Dashed line = track of depression centre (x marks midday positions), 12th-13th Sept 1993
Horizontal shading = main areas of land-based records, 13th-14th Sept 1993
Dotted line = edge of continental shelf
1, 2, 3 = locations of Belle-Île, Vilaine estuary and Les Sables d'Olonne respectively
Angled shading = area of recently observed offshore concentrations



MANZANILLA
LA GITANA

CHRISTMAS PUZZLE

Illustrated by John Hollyer

Contrived by Tim Sharrock

Sponsored by *Vinicola Hidalgo SA*



Andy, Brian and Cyn had one fantastic day in the field this autumn. Of the 15 *Phylloscopus* warblers that they had in view at the same time, eight had wing-bars and four had a distinct pale rump-patch.

At one point, Cyn observed that 'I've got three individuals of one species close to me.' Brian responded that 'There's definitely two of another species, too: one perched to my right and one flying in from my left.' Excitedly, Cyn whispered '... and one of those two recent splits by the BOURC—I can see two, one of each species, both to my left.' At this, Andy added '... and I've got a third: one of the commoner of those two species is in my scope.'

At the end of the day, Andy commented: 'I know that we've seen 11 of the 12 British species of *Phylloscopus*, but I don't know which one we didn't see.' 'Nor do I,' said Brian. 'Me neither,' echoed Cyn.

'Do you realise,' said Andy, 'that only seven of those birds were of species that breed closer to Britain than the Urals?' Cyn then added: 'But four of them might have bred in Britain.'

11. Which was the most numerous species that day?

12. Which two species were next most numerous?

13. In not more than 5 words, explain why none of the three birders knew which species they had not seen.

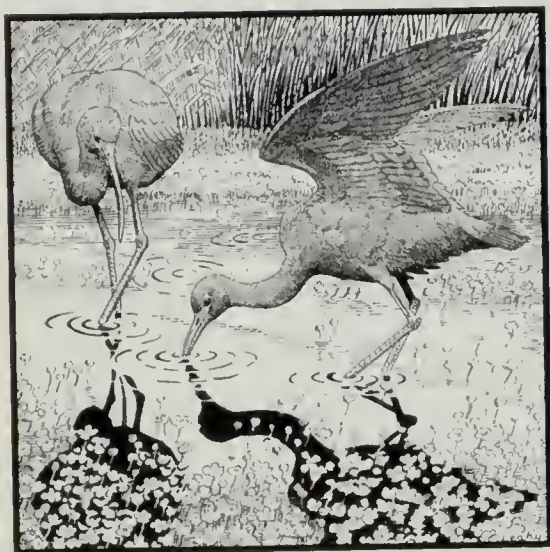
Send your three answers on a postcard to BB Christmas Puzzle, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ to arrive by 15th January 1999. The three competitors whose correct entries are drawn on that date will each win the very appropriate festive-season prize of a bottle of three bottles of *La Gitana* sherry (a light, crisp, delicately flavoured sherry, best drunk chilled as an aperitif). © British Birds Ltd 1998



1. Great Crested Grebe, Monikie Country Park, spring 1997 (*Paul S. Hartley*)



2. Rooks, Hernhill (*Mark James*)



3. Glossy Ibises, Lesbos, Greece (*Ernie Leahy*)



4. Northern Lapwing, Common Redshank and Common Snipe (*Barry Ryan*)



5. Mandarin Duck, Alverstone Marsh, Isle of Wight (*Michael Webb*)

Illustrations for sale by auction

Five drawings, picked from amongst those submitted for Bird Illustrator of the Year 1998, are for sale in a postal auction (see page 66 for the procedure). Each original picture measures approximately 16.8 cm × 16.8 cm.

Send in your bids now, to arrive by 15th January 1999. Send no money now, just your bid for any one (or more) of the illustrations. The highest bid will be accepted in each case (provided it exceeds the artist's reserve price), and you will be asked to pay your bid price plus £1.50 to cover postage & packing. During the past year, successful bids have ranged from £35 to £162, and the average has been £97. Send your name, address, telephone number and your bid(s) to Postal Bids, British Birds, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.



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Front cover: Snow Buntings *Plectrophenax nivalis* (*Robert Gillmor*). This, the twenty-first December cover by Robert Gillmor, returns to the species featured in his first. As usual, the original, measuring 18.35 × 18.35 cm, is for sale in a postal auction (see page 66 for procedure).

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Compiled by M. A. Ogilvie

Entries are in single list with reference to:

(1) every significant mention of each species, not only in titles, but also within the text of papers, notes and letters, including all those appearing in such lists as the 'Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 1997', major mentions of those in 'News and comment', but excluding those in 'Recent reports', requests and reviews. Where species appear both in 'The ornithological year 1997' and in the 'Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 1997', however, only the latter inclusion is listed;

(2) scientific nomenclature under generic name only and following *The 'British Birds' List of Birds of the Western Palearctic* (1997);

(3) authors of all papers, notes, reviews and letters, and photographers; papers and notes are referred to by their titles, other contributions as 'letter on', 'review of', etc.;

(4) a few subject headings, e.g. 'Announcements', 'Breeding', 'Field characters', 'Food and feeding behaviour', 'News and comment', 'Rarities Committee', 'Recent reports', 'Roosting', and 'Voice';

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